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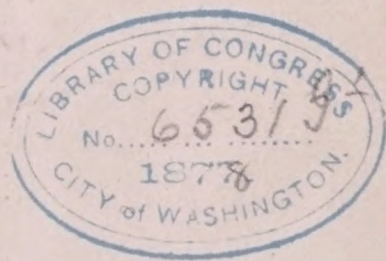
SCATTERED BY THE TEMPEST.

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A NOVEL.

✓
BY FRANK VAUGHAN.
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KATE WEATHERS; OR, SCATTERED BY THE TEMPEST.

CHAPTER I.

A LEAF FROM THE RECORD.

NEARLY the whole three hundred miles of North Carolina sea-coast is a sterile reef of yellow sand, as destitute of vegetation in many places as the deserts of Arabia.

This reef is cut through at long intervals by "inlets" that make of it a chain of islands, some of which are as much as forty miles long, and but little more than one mile wide at any point.

These inlets afford passage-way in and out for vessels of light draft, and through them the fresh waters of the broad sounds and their tributaries flow out and mingle with the briny floods of the deep.

The coast, owing to the fact that the greater part of it is a low level, elevated but a few feet above high water, and to the further fact that three great capes—Hatteras, Lookout, and Fear—shoot out from it many miles into the ocean, is, proverbially, a dangerous one.

Time was, when "those who go down to the sea in ships, and do business on the great waters," trembled at approaching it; and even now, in our day of light-houses, the mariner, while skirting along by it, keeps a sharp eye to his barometer, for he can but feel anxious while continue in his view the great surging billows that are forever rolling and plunging over the sunken capes. And though Fear and Lookout have

been doubled in safety, aye, though Hatteras has been "sunk" far astern, still he is in dread; for, still away and away, before him stretches the low reef, with not a prominent object upon it, except that here and there, at great distances apart, little hummocks of stunted live-oaks lift their green heads modestly in the sunlight, and gleam like emeralds in a yellow belt. But even the little hummocks are hid from the view when foul weather comes on, except upon a too near approach to the treacherous beach. And woe to that ship from distant lands that has lost her reckoning, and is nearing these shores through the gloom of night, when east winds are pressing and rolling the great clouds of mist and fog from the Gulf Stream shoreward!

The inlets are by no means permanent and continuing. Those terrible tempests that often sweep over the coast have complete control of them. And the place where to-day is a broad, deep channel, may in less time than a week be only another part of the low, sandy level; while, perhaps, miles away a new channel as broad and as deep as the lost one will have made its appearance.

And so, in the memory of living men, several of these passages that were broadest and deepest, and navigable by larger class schooners and brigs, have filled in, and others at other points have opened. Yet the channel generally continues long enough to give name to its locality; and the name so acquired is never lost, even though the channel may cease to exist. Thus Currituck Inlet, Old Inlet, Nagshead Inlet, and others, are at this day only neighborhood names, for no inlet is nearer than ten miles, or more, of any of them; those that gave the names having long ago filled in and disappeared.

Body's Island is that section of the coast-reef which extends from New Inlet to Nagshead,—the distance of about twenty miles.

Owing to the fact that there is at present no inlet at Nagshead, Body's Island is no island at all; yet it continues to be "Body's Island" on the charts, and the great light-house recently erected nearly in the centre of it, whose cupola towers two hundred feet above the plain, is laid down as "Body's Island Light."

The continuation of the coast from Nagshead northward is known by the name of North Banks. Here the face of the

country differs somewhat from Body's Island, and presents a greater variety of scene. Here are ridges, and hills, and thickets of stunted trees, matted and tangled, and tied together by brier and bramble and the wild grape-vine; and it is here, in the midst of the densest jungles, that the "banker's" rude hut is hid.

These thickets, that are altogether on the Sound side of the reef, are in some instances five or six miles long; and they, with the clusters of ridges and hills that loom up here and there, are notable landmarks, and well known to the passing mariner. Many a time have they warned the ship away in time to save precious life before the coming on of the storm; and this accounts for the fact that there are fewer wrecks here than are scattered over the flat plains of Body's Island.

With the exception of the capes and the beach in their immediate vicinity, Body's Island is not only the most sterile and desolate, but it is also the most dangerous section of the whole line of coast; and of this it bears full proof upon its face. What volumes of tragic history are written upon its barren sands! What tales of horror are told by the great bleaching skeletons of ships that lie grinning ghastly enough in every direction around! For all along, from inlet to inlet, the débris of ships, and brigs, and schooners, and other craft, lie scattered about. Here is a long keel, with broken and splintered ribs still firmly attached; here is a hatch, with its rusty rings still in the diagonal corners. Here are parts of a galley, the full frame of a yawl, sections of deck, with the planks still securely bolted and rivetted to the beams. Here are broken masts and spars, a quarter-deck entire, a cabin-door, a forecastle hatch, a solitary stern-post standing erect, the timbers to which it is attached being buried beneath the sand. In another place are broken and battered gunwales, a keelson, complete from stem to stern, with here and there a few snaggy fragments of ribs, and parts of the decayed bends bolted to them, and with the massive cut-water still firmly holding its place. Yonder, high and dry upon the sand, is a huge bark; her hull, which is almost entire, is bent and twisted out of shape, and a portion of her deck is gone; one of her masts, with a couple of cross-spars upon it, is still standing in its place, the others are gone; the jib-boom is still in place, and beneath it the mermaid figure-head, sadly dis-

figured by wind and wave and the pitiless hand of time. Farther on still is a mammoth ship, careening over on her side; she, also, has one entire mast, from whose cross-trees several ends of bleached rope are dangling in the breeze. The mizzen-mast has been cut away, for deep strokes of the axe are marked upon its stump; not so the main-mast, whose shivered stump shows that it was twisted and snapped off by the whirling wind; the copper sheeting has been ripped from the ship's bottom as high as it could be reached, and of that that remains the loosened corners are clanging against her at every gust of wind. Not far from this ship are parts of the old frame of another that came there long years ago: the timbers are well hacked and chopped, and most of the copper bolts and rods have been cut out of them and carried away. In another place is the stern-end of a brig that seems to have been snapped short off from the other end. The vessel was probably broken while at sea, for the bow-end is nowhere to be seen; it may be that it was burst into fragments, and strewed by the raging storm along the beach, or it may have been swept miles away and stranded entire. This aft-end is about thirty feet long, and sits upon an even keel that is deep down in the sand; it is so entire and perfect that even the lettering upon it may be made out,—“*Dolphin, of Portland, Maine.*”

So, all along, the coast is wreck-strewed, and so are recorded the tempest's deeds on the yellow sands of Body's Island.

That great ship, the fragments of whose skeleton lie deep buried in the sand, sprang a-leak while in mid-ocean. Signals of distress were hoisted to the mast-head. Officers, crew, and passengers took their turn at the pumps, and worked and labored day and night,—day after day and night after night,—until all the provisions on board were consumed,—until the last drop of fresh water had been drawn from the tanks and drank,—until those earnest laborers had become faint and exhausted. Still relief came not. Time after time the broad circle of horizon was swept from the decks by the telescope; but naught was to be seen, not even a speck upon the great eternity of ocean.

Deeper and deeper in the water she sank. Bales, boxes, barrels, and crates were tumbled over into the sea. Still

deeper and deeper she settled, and more and more sluggish and unmanageable she became.

At last all hands took to the small boats and left the ship to her fate; aye, left her to *her* fate, and went out to meet theirs! To what point of the compass should they shape their course? The wind breezed up fresher; the billows rolled higher and higher, and began to reel about wildly and to toss and tumble over with louder and louder roaring. One after another the boats swamped,—all swamped but one. And piteous were the cries as each went under with its living freight. Piteous! but the sad wail ceased almost as soon as it burst forth, and then, again, naught was heard except the endless, ceaseless dirge of rolling, falling floods. Bravely that last boat continued to ride on, bearing its three weary, starving, famishing occupants. Three! pitiful remnant of forty-six!

Suddenly one of that weary three drops his oar, snatches the gleaming blade from the belt-sheath at his side, and plunges it deep into the heart of the companion who has been sitting there on the thwart before him and faintly laboring for hours. Two of the three oars are idle now—his that is murdered, and the murderer's. He that was stricken when in the act of making a stroke with his oar has tumbled backwards into the bottom of the boat. And there he lies silent, but staring wildly, while the red stream gushes and spurts at every breath from the gaping wound, until, with a deep-drawn sigh,—a spasm,—a quivering of the frame from head to foot, he dies; and all the while he that struck stands looking wonderingly on. He is a maniac!

One only oar is left, and he that labors with that must both labor and defend himself against the fury of a madman. But renewed strength is in his arm, for he fully realizes his terrible predicament; and by speech, and warning gesture, and the determined expression of his face he holds the madman at bay—aye, holds *him* at bay who stands now in the extreme bow-end of the boat, whither he has retreated, facing his struggling shipmate, waving the bloody knife over and over his own head (laughing immoderately as he does so), and keeping his strangely glittering eyes fixed upon the poor tired one who sits upon the aft thwart and has hard work to hold his craft's bow to the heaving swell and guard against the fury of his dreadful mate.

A white speck twinkles like a star in the far horizon. It grows larger and larger. A bark approaches. From her cross-trees an hour ago the struggling boat was spied. He that labors at the oar sees that speck, and well he knows what it is. A thrill of glad hope warms his bosom, yet the ship may pass on by and sink again beneath the horizon. Equal for a time is the struggle in his bosom between hope and fear; but larger and larger grows the speck, and hope is victor. The maniac! he, too, has turned his eyes away; he, too, has discovered the approaching ship, and has taken his mad gaze from his trembling companion's face. The hand that holds the reeking knife has dropped, he has seated himself upon the bow-thwart, and, with his elbows resting on the windward gunwale and his head and body reaching forward, he has gazed and gazed and stared in wondering silence until that little speck has grown into a great ship that speeds with wings outspread before the breeze. Not gladness but terror is depicted in his face as that ship draws near. "Hard a-lee!" is heard. The bark rounds to. Her great spread wings roll and rumble, and the loose halliards rattle upon them. The maniac springs to his feet, plunges,—is lost from sight forever.

That fragment of the brig, with the faint lettering still upon the stern, was gallantly ploughing along before the light breeze, bearing a rich freight of merchandise toward a distant port. When she left the haven at home genial sunlight was streaming over the land and waters, the skies were blue and beautiful, birds were singing sweetly in the groves on shore, the wind was light and fair, and the craft glided out of her harbor with gay colors and long, starry pennant streaming from the mast-head, amid the cheers and adieus of well-wishing friends. For three whole days and nights her sails remained just as they were when she glided out of port, and everything bade fair for a happy and prosperous voyage. The steersman's task was light, and the crew had but little else to do than to cluster about on deck and spin long yarns for one another, each telling of his own adventures and of his many hair-breadth escapes from a grave in the deep waters. And loud would be the laugh when one would tell of a time when the tempest came and swallowed up all but him; and how he clung to the ring of a floating hatch, and was tossed and plunged about day after day and night after night; and how at times he would

succeed in drawing himself upon the hatch ; and how, after a minute's rest upon it, hatch and man would be rolled over and swallowed by the wave ; and how he and his craft would emerge again, when he would get another minute's rest ; and how, after long, weary days, a ship hove in sight and came on and picked him up, starved and famished as he was, and carried him away to a distant port ; and how he again shipped as soon as he could find a berth. So were the lazy hours whiled away.

But suddenly, and without warning, on the morning of the fourth day out, the white squall came. Seeming to descend from mid-sky, and leaping into the cloud of snowy sails, it split them in an instant of time into ten thousand ribbons. Nor were only the sails destroyed, but masts and yards were shattered into fragments and swept away.

As night came on, dismal clouds heaved up and curtained the sky. The craft began to reel and tumble heavily in the dreary waters. Three trusty men were lashed to the stanchions near the tiller. Each one of the crew (who must now all be on deck) made himself busy in preparing as well as possible for his own safety, by fastening one end of a rope around his body, under his arms, and making the other end secure to a ring or cleat or gunwale, so that if he should be washed from the decks he might be able to haul himself back on board. Then, after all this was done, each reported himself, in a loud voice, to the officers and steersmen as being ready to perform, so far as it might be in his power to do so, their orders. Continually the billows were rearing higher and higher, until they became great grim mountains rolling and chasing one another away into the thick gloom. For hours the trusty three were able to keep her luffed so as to ride the seas ; but the task was a difficult one even for three strong, brave men to perform. At times, in spite of all they could do, great billows would come bounding and crashing on deck,—bounding, crashing ; then the rushing flood would sweep the decks from stem to stern, roaring and foaming as they went.

Still the helpless craft reels and plunges on. Little service now does the tiny sail on the jury-mast ; little good do those who are lashed to the stanchions, for the rudder seems to have lost its power ; and little do those men on the decks but to hold with all the energy of hardy manhood to the ropes and

to whatever else their hands may clutch ; for the battle is now for life, and bravely it must be fought.

At last morning dawns. The storm has lulled away, but the sea is raging still. The clouds are breaking up and melting from the blue sky. The sun leaps up from his briny bed, and his first crimson rays fall upon the ghastly faces of those trusty three at the tiller,—those brave three who are now cold in death,—drowned in the floods that for hours past have been deluging the decks. And where are the crew ? All, all gone ! Not one is left. The ropes, that for a while did good service, could not bear the strains of the continually repeated bursting of the seas upon deck, and the continual sweeping off of those they held bound. They were snapped at last ; and some of those brave ones are now miles and miles away to the leeward, the fragments of rope still securely tied around their bodies, sweeping and plunging with the billows.

Near by the prow is one, the last that submitted to the conqueror. He is dancing a death-dance ; wildly, madly dancing, leaping, plunging ! Now shooting above the surface head foremost or feet foremost, now gyrating in some quick maelstrom that forms and fills in a minute of time, now rapidly spinning over and over, now darting up to the very apex of a great billow whose boiling foam is as white as an Alpine knob, and now avalanching head foremost down deep into the green brine beneath.

Still the wreck floats. Still she goes reeling and plunging towards the beach which is now not far distant. The tide is at flood, and the fierce east winds have raised the sea far above the usual high-water line. She passes over the outer reef, scarcely touching it with her keel. In a little time she reaches the inner reef, where she grounds ; but billow follows billow, each one of which lifts her farther on, each dashing high a cloud of spray, each folding her in glittering sheets as it goes arching high above her decks.

The craft has a stanch hull, but the many terrible thumps she receives as each swell runs from under her and drops her bodily on the hard reef are more than she can bear. She wears around with her bow towards the shore, and then a mountain sea takes her up and hurls her down again, when, as if she were as brittle as glass, she snaps asunder, the heavier stern-end continuing to creep nearer and nearer shoreward,

while the lighter bow-end eddies and waltzes away with the strong current that is pouring through the slough to the northward.

Ah, how gladly that wreck and her rich freight are welcomed to the beach by the swarm of rude people who stand upon the shore! and how little are they thinking of those brave three, whose heads are now bowed low, and whose limber bodies hang to the stanchions!

And this is but a page of the sad record of the tempest's deeds; a mere line of what is written upon the barren sands of Body's Island; a page that was written long years ago. May there never another such be written there! Thank God for the light-house, and for the life-saving station, and for the coast telegraph; and thank God for the brave wrecker of the present day, who is ever ready, if need be, to risk his own life that he may save that of a fellow-creature!

CHAPTER II.

THE BANKER.

So completely is the North Banker's hut wrapped and covered by the foliage of the thicket, that it cannot be seen at all except by ascending to the tops of the neighboring hills and looking down into the valley upon it, or by following the narrow paths that wind along through the jungle to its very door. There are good reasons, too, for its being where it is; for if it were placed upon the naked sands of the plain, the occupant would not only be continually annoyed and incommoded by the drifts, but, in a few years at most, his dwelling would be buried beneath them. Again, by being in the thicket it is protected, to a considerable extent, from the fierce winds that so frequently sweep over the coast.

And yet, be it where it may, it cannot remain long; for it will not be long before the very valley in which it rests will have disappeared. Every breeze from ocean sweeps the light drifts soundward, and ere long the green woods will be known

no more—the great yellow ridge that will have rolled upon it will only mark its grave.

The North Banker is neither farmer nor florist. Not only his calling, but his taste as well, is in another direction. He could not be a farmer if he would, for his territory is desert. He would not be if he could, for the invitations to engage in a life of continual excitement are so many and so pressing that it would be out of his power to resist them even if it were his desire to do so. Life and activity are about him on every hand. Everything near him is motion. The ocean, forever rolling, forever moaning as its waves come and fall on the shore. The myriad dwellers in the deep, forever changing place. The winds are seldom at rest; fleets of white-winged canoes are ever seen gliding here and there over the sounds; ships rise up to view in the far offing,—they creep slowly and slowly along by, then sink beneath the horizon; other ships arise, pass on, and sink. All that he sees is moving, and he cannot plod.

The plough, the spade, and the hoe would be but awkwardly handled by him. To him the ox and the horse would be next to useless, for few of the pursuits of other men are his. But how skilfully he manages his boat! With what ease his strong arm lifts the mast, and how nimbly his horny fingers perform the work they have to do! In his boat he is captain, mate, cook,—crew. He ships the rudder, sprits the mainsail, raises the jib, sets the topsail, draws the anchor, shoves down the centre-board, slips the tiller in place,—and all in a twinkling; then he shifts the ballast, trims the sails, cleats the sheets,—and away! How rapidly and precisely it is all done; and yet how smoothly, how well it is done!

The North Banker is an autocrat, a despot, a ruler of boundless power in his little empire,—himself subject to no man. His throne is the aft seat in his boat; upon it he sits and reigns. His dominion is over the broad waters; and no one arises to question his right. He is a lord upon the barren reef as well as upon the water; all around him is his by right, and he moves his residence from place to place in the valleys at will; nor does he deign to consult another before doing so, for he is lord paramount. Like the wind, he is free, and he goeth whithersoever he listeth. He goes and he returns as his own lordly mind may will. When he sets out

upon a voyage, it matters not to him whether the weather be bright and pleasant, or foul and wintry; nor does it matter whether the winds be favorable or adverse,—whether wavelets dance and sing before the gentle breeze, or billows tempest-driven heave and groan. He never turns back: either he glides gently on, or buffets and labors to the end of his journey. In either case he looks over the bow, and is sure to reach the point for which he set out before resting; then, after reaching that point, when he wills, he returns. His sharp eye is quick to glimpse the coming wreck. Though far away she may be, and though the storm be dashing high the spray, yet he sees her; and he can say for a certainty how she is rigged, what spars she has lost, or whether she be loaded, logged, or light,—nor only so, but where she will beach. Without a barometer, he will tell you of coming foul or fair weather, and when and to what point of the compass the wind will veer next. From him you may learn whether the morrow will be drear or bright; and, when the tempest comes on, it is not often that he will fail to number for you the hours of its staying.

His family is his tribe: he is not only their patriarch, but their acknowledged superior. From his storehouse, the great deep, he draws his supplies at will: that storehouse is plentifully filled; but his needs being few and his wants modest, they are easily and speedily supplied.

In a word, the North Banker is a freeman,—a free man indeed; one that is untrammelled; one that is in no manner bound down by precedent, nor hampered by conventional rule. Himself a despot and subject to no earthly being, he scorns the theory that all men are created free and equal.

But the low grovelling heart of humanity beats and throbs in the banker's bosom as it does in the bosom of another man. His disposition to reign, and to accumulate around him that which he regards as wealth, leads him at times, as other men are led, to violate the golden rule of brotherhood.

But how far the banker of to-day is advanced beyond the point occupied by his ancestors of a century ago! Those predecessors, though, were beset by temptations that he knows not of. The sea-coast in their old day was almost outside the pale of civilization; therefore the same restraints were not around them that operate upon their descendants of the present

day. The law had no terrors for them, for the law was not for them. Who was there away out on that isolated land to testify of misdeeds? Who, at a place so remote, so seldom visited by strangers, and where churches and school-houses were absolutely unknown, that really knew what right was, or that wrong was wrong? Ah, it would be neither right nor just to judge the old-time banker hastily or harshly, however dark his ways.

The banker of old was a king, far more absolute in his sway than his descendant of to-day. He regarded the tempest as his friendly fairy; and all that was "flotsam, jetsam, and ligan," that happened to come within the range of his vision, he considered to be his of right. Corpses, it is true, might strew the beach, but these were accidents in which he had not interest; and he gave himself no more concern about them than if they had been bubbles blown up from the frothing brine.

His disposition to rule and tyrannize was sinking him continually into deeper and deeper darkness. In his ignorance he was fierce and inhospitable,—more fierce and inhospitable it may be than other men. Being an absolute sovereign upon his own territory, and long accustomed to reign undisturbed, he regarded the coming of a stranger with suspicion, and was sure to treat him as an intruder whose aims and designs might be to usurp some of his prerogatives.

But old things have passed away. Christianity and science have blended their powers and besieged the strongholds of ignorance, and the result is that the banker of to-day may stand upon his native hills and see extending away up and down the coast the wires of the telegraph, ready to flash from the outside world intelligence of the coming of the storm,—ready to call in assistance from the outside world that may save the precious lives of those who are in the battered and dismantled ship that rolls and plunges in the offing, struggling to keep away until light from the star of hope may be seen gleaming through the gloom. He may see here and there along the bald reef life-saving stations, each with its brave crews and its appliances for assisting and saving the distressed and unfortunate, and its scarlet signals floating on high to warn away the ship before the coming on of the tempest. And he may see great light-houses steeping high above the

plain, that nightly throw their gleaming ray far out in ocean to guide the mariner aright and keep him in the true line of his course, though starless be the skies and drear the waters.

Now, over that region, that seemed once to have the curse of the Creator expressed in its darkness,—that region of desolate barrenness whose sands are closely written over with the record of horrible tragedies that have been enacted upon them,—even over a region so drear and gloomy, Christianity and science have spread forth their wings of light. With their united powers they have attacked and driven back one after another the demons of darkness, whose grim shadows kept ever concealed from the banker of old the paradise of peace.

The scenes that present themselves to the eyes of him who, at the sunsetting of a clear, calm summer's day, stands upon the summit of Jockey Ridge, are passing beautiful and glorious. Away north and away south, as far as eye can reach, extends the yellow thread of the coast,—that wonderful embankment thrown up by the hand of nature, separating sound from sea: on one side are ever heard the monotonous groanings of swells bursting upon the hard, smooth beach; and on the other, the murmuring music of rippling waves: on one side of which are seen the far wastes of billowy green, with sky horizon for their boundary; and on the other, Albemarle's quiet, blue waters, tinged and tinted with the hues of cloud and sky, reaching away to the threadlike arc of the western shore, and Roanoke Island, like a green oasis, in the midst; its picturesque shores dwindling away southward in the dim distance.

Midway between the northern and southern points of the island, and almost directly opposite that part of the coast where Nagshead Inlet once was, Shallowbag Bay is seen scooping with graceful curve, between Ballast and Sandy Points, a mile back into the heart of the green island.

Nor are these scenes wanting in historic interest. It was through the old Nagshead Inlet that Arthur Barlow and Philip Amidas, Sir Walter Raleigh's captains, passed in their quaint little ships in July A.D. 1584: it was near Ballast Point that these explorers of the old time first dropped anchor, after a tedious voyage of many months across the deep. It was on the shores of Shallowbag Bay that the rude savages who inhabited the island gathered in crowds to gaze upon the great white-winged creatures that rode at anchor in the channel, and

to wonder in astonishment at the strange beings that moved about upon them: it was at that very place that the ships of Captain Ralph Lane, one year afterwards (namely in July, A.D. 1585), landed those one hundred and eight English emigrants, who had, at home in the distant land, listened to the wonderful stories that were told to them of the New World: of its wild but peaceful people; of its crystal rivers, that purled along over beds of glittering gold, and of its grand forests and wastes of gorgeous flowers: it was near the head of that bay that, in the same year, the first American of English parentage—Virginia Dare—was born: it was near the North End, three miles north of the bay, where those one hundred and eight afterwards erected a fort as a protection for themselves and their little property from the savages, whom they had in some manner offended: and it was opposite that little fort, the remains of which are still to be seen, that Drake, in 1587, anchored his ships, and took on board those that remained of the sadly-disappointed emigrants, and their little American addition, and sailed back with them to their native land.

And would that history had nothing more sorrowful to relate of occurrences at Roanoke Island! There, in February, 1862, the booming of artillery and the rattle of musketry were heard: then came death and ruin swooping by, and the dark shadows of their outspread wings fell drearily enough upon the fair island. Then poured plentifully out upon the sands the warm heart's blood of contending brothers; there fell brave Selden, gallant Wise, and a host of others,—there were closed in death the eyes of a brave host. Peace to the fallen heroes!

CHAPTER III.

THE MESSENGER AND HER MESSAGE.

SEPTEMBER the eleventh, A.D. 1789, was one of those chill, dreary days that are not unfrequently experienced in mid-autumn at the sea-coast.

Two days before, the wind had backed from southwest to southeast, and then to northeast, where it settled, and from

which point it had since continued to blow, ever increasing in violence, and with no prospect yet of lull or change.

The wind struck the coast in the region of Nagshead in a line so nearly perpendicular to it that the great ranks of billows—each rank miles and miles long, and extending as far up and as far down as eye could reach—came in, one following another, squarely upon the beach. The storm was almost at its height. The billows came, rearing high their heads,—foaming and tumbling over on the hard sand,—crashing and booming: crash following crash, and boom echoing to boom at regular intervals, as if the tempest furies were beating time to their wild music.

So furiously came the floods driving in, that great sloughs and channels were cut out all along parallel with the shore, and between it and the reefs; and through these the wild seas went rushing impetuously to the southward. Each billow, just before bursting, would shoot suddenly up to a great height, and for an instant stand there like a green wall lining the shore. Then gradually its crest would lean farther and farther and farther shoreward, until it would give way and pour forward, roaring with louder and louder roar, until the whole grand structure had fallen and left a place for its near successor to rear and stand, then tumble forward with crash and roar as it had done; and, at the bursting of each sea, clouds of spray would boil up high in air, then stream off with the wind across the beach.

From early morning purplish clouds had been rising out of the far sea and scudding in, and on over the sound, and on still, until they had settled down into a dark sullen bank above the distant mainland. Later in the day the whole sky became overcast with a dull, leaden-hued covering that seemed to reflect its gloom on land and sea, and to render far more dreary the scenes that were desolate enough before; and wind and sky and ocean foretold that the tempest was to be an unusually severe one, and that its climax was near at hand.

Seated on low stools near the feeble blaze that flickered up from the few half-rotten sticks that were bunched together on the fireplace in Stam Weathers's hut were three women. Two of these were engaged in earnest conversation, while the third and youngest of them, who sat with her face towards the jamb at one end of the hearth, was busily engaged weaving shad net. Upon an old chest near the open door a strongly-

built, heavily-whiskered man, apparently about forty years of age, was sitting, holding awkwardly enough in his great rough arms a sleeping baby, whose little weazen face told plainly that disease had taken a strong hold upon it. On the chest near the man's side sat a girl about fourteen years old, who was peering with a quiet, earnest gaze over his arm into the sleeping infant's cadaverous face.

One unacquainted with the manners of the North Banker, and with his customs and habits of life, upon peeping into Stam's hut at that time, would have been struck with the queer ensemble of the house, its furniture, and its occupants. The dingy little dwelling was built of round logs and roofed with boards. Between the logs were open spaces, in many places wide enough for the hand and wrist to be thrust, and in the roof were scores of peeping-holes for the skylight; the chimney, to the height of six feet from the ground, was also built of round logs notched together and lined on the inside with a thick daubing of mud; then it was continued on up from the log frame by three headless barrels, one on another, the topmost one reaching a few inches above the ridge-pole of the roof: the floor was of thick planks that had been ripped from the decks of some wreck; and the four or five joists were only slender poles that had been cut from the thicket and stripped of their bark,—these were so low that a tall person could scarcely walk erect beneath them.

The furniture consisted of the three stools upon which the women sat, the chest aforesaid, and a bunk with its scant covering,—nothing more, unless the few cooking utensils that had a place near one corner of the hearth might be ranked as furniture.

The dress and general appearance of the occupants were in fair keeping with the house and its furniture. The women were bonnetless, shoeless, stockingless; their hair was twisted into knobby mops that were carried up and in some manner secured upon the crowns of their heads, and their scant and faded frocks were cut and made without regard to beauty, style, or fit. The man and girl who sat upon the chest were also barefooted. He wore neither coat nor vest, and his loosely-fitting and well-patched pantaloons were held in place by a pair of canvas suspenders that were crossed on the back of his faded red flannel shirt. Fully one-half of his face

and neck were concealed by his long blowzy hair and shaggy whiskers, neither of which had the appearance of ever having been touched with comb or brush. The girl was clad with a single garment,—a short lank frock buttoned on the back with four great brass buttons; her lustreless hair hung straggling down over her neck and shoulders, and her broad feet and yellow ankles looked as if neither shoes nor stockings had ever been upon them. But most uncouth of all was the baby's appearance,—its little frock was only relieved of its pillow-slip straightness by a band at the neck, and a few puckers and gathers around the body immediately under the arms; and a skillet-shaped cap of dingy red flannel fitted closely upon its scurfy head, and extended far enough down to half cover its ears and forehead.

Such were Stam Weathers and his family; and such was their mode of living. Nor were they eccentric exceptions to the rule; for, follow the winding paths that lead through the thicket to the residences of other North Bankers, and it will be seen that Stam's ways are the ways of other dwellers on the coast.

Though similar in every respect the garb and personal adornment of the three women in the hut, yet in many respects three persons more unlike were never seen.

The two who sat at opposite ends of the hearth—the one plying rapidly the long wooden needle and weaving mesh after mesh upon the block that she held in her left hand, the other crouching forward, resting her sharp chin in the palms of her hands and her elbows on her knees, and holding the short stem of the pipe that she was smoking firmly clinched between her snaggy teeth—were Kate and Nancy Weathers, the wife and mother of Stam; the third, who sat immediately in front of the fireplace, was Peggy Strubl, a visitor, who had but recently come in, and without ceremony or invitation seated herself there, nearly between the two, and forthwith, in a coarse masculine voice, entered into conversation with Nancy; not even offering neighborly greeting to a soul present, or in any manner recognizing the existence of any one except her to whom she was speaking.

The sharply-pointed face of old Nancy Weathers was of that malignant type that fails never to suggest distress and misery to the beholder,—one above which hangs evermore a

dark cloud that ceases not to discharge its burning bolts of venom while there is an object within reach upon which they may fall,—one upon which the light of peace is never, even for an instant, seen to beam,—while Kate's was one of those pleasantly modest and womanly faces that can but shine forth even in the absence of fair apparel and the studied adornment of the person: hers was one of those faces that tell of a loving and kindly nature.

Not once since the entry of the visitor had Kate opened her mouth to speak; yet it was not difficult to see that she heard every word that was being said by the others; nor only so, but the nervous movements of her nimble fingers, her pausing and gazing an instant at the speakers at times, the tremor upon her purple lips, and the quick shadows of fear and anxiety that came to dim the light of her eyes and darken the features of her gentle face, told plainly enough how deep an interest she felt in the subject of their conversation.

"If that's all you've come to tell," said Nancy Weathers, as she took her pipe from her mouth and turned her scowling face full towards that of the visitor, "you'd as well stayed where you was, for I knowed *that* as well as you. Ain't I been all day long goin' up and down the beach, and to the top of one hill, and then to the top of another, lookin' out into the offin', and strainin' my eyes a'most out o' my head, to catch a glimpse of somethin'? and ain't my eyes about as good as yourn? I know there ain't nothing there as well as you do, for if there had been I should a seed it if it hadn't been no bigger'n a porpuss. Fact is, things ain't like they usea to be in times gone, no way; and, for the good they does, storms had about as well not come as to come. A blow like this, thirty or forty year ago, would have had three or four craft, if no more, high and dry; and then there'd been things enough strowed up and down the beach to keep one pickin' up, first and last, a whole month. Here's the wind been blowin' a gale two days, and plumb on to the land at that, and nothin' yet. It wouldn't been that way in times gone! I know well enough that the ship that that gig come from ain't far out,—anybody knows it,—but that ship ain't comin' here, see if she does. Things didn't work that way in times gone: but nowadays, for the good they does, storms and calms is all one."

"Who knows but the ship's gone under?" said Peggy Strubl;

"and if she's done that, how could she get *here*? Crafts has *heavy* freights sometimes, as well as light; and, for what you know, this one was loaded with rock or brick. That's just the way of it, too, like as any way; and maybe them that was aboard, seein' that she was about to sink, took their chances to git ashore in the gig. But, then, talkin' about sich things as that ain't what I've come for: Jim sent me here to see Stam."

"To see Stam! What does he want with Stam?"

"To see me?" asked Stam, as he raised his eyes from the baby's face and turned them inquiringly towards the woman. "What does Jim Beam want with me?"

"Well, now, there's no use lookin' so sharkish about it," said Peggy; "he sent me, and I've told you so; but if that's all you want to know about it, why, let it drop right there, and I'll go back and tell him."

"And so," growled Nancy, "Jim and Pete's home, nussin' the fire, too, is they? I was thinkin' that Stam Weathers was about the only man on North Banks that stayed home sich a time as this, to nuss fires and tote babies about, instead of bein' out on the beach on the watch for what mought be seen. Sich as that wasn't the ways of men in times gone."

"Maybe you'd as well keep your mouth shut a spell," said Peggy, turning fiercely towards the hag. "You'd find out more, I'm thinkin', by doin' that, and listenin' till it should come your time to put in. What's anybody said to *you*? It's with Stam that I'm come to talk now, and not you; and then, what business is it of yourn whether Jim and Pete goes out or stays in? But, as to that, they *has* been out ever since long before daylight this mornin', and has just got back home."

"What is it they want with me?" asked Stam, again.

"Well, it's about this way," said Peggy: "Jim and Pete started up the beach long before daybreak, and by the time they got off against Kill-Devils it was light enough for them to see, soon as it was, that somebody was ahead of 'em. Whoever it was, was standin' close down to the surf. Presently he looks and sees Jim and Pete comin', and off he starts across the sand towards the thicket; then Jim and Pete hurries on to the place where he had been standin', and there was the gig, that looked as though she had just beached. Pete

starts off on a run, then, following after the man; but it was too late, for he had got into the thicket and gone; and it was too dark yet to see him in there, even if he had happened to come up near to him."

"Well," said Nancy, rising nervously to her feet, "what of all that? Had the man got anything out of the gig and gone with it?"

Peggy scowled contemptuously at the questioner, and, without replying to her question, continued: "So, you see, somebody's got somethin' out o' that gig that was worth more than the gig, that was left behind for another; *and it's knowed who that somebody is!*"

"I see now!" said Nancy. "Like as any way it was a bagfull of gold that was brought from the ship; a bagfull of gold!"

"Let that be what it mought," said Peggy, "it was worth more than the boat that was left behind. But it wasn't no *bag*: as the man pitched into the thicket, Pete seed that it was a little box that he was huggin' up to his breast with both arms."

"It was a *box-full* of gold," said Nancy; "and it's knowed who got it? Why didn't Jim and Pete foller on? They mought a come up by him and got it, after a spell."

"Why?—Why?—Why didn't Jim and Pete foller and catch the man and take the box from him?" said Peggy, in a towering passion at being so often interrupted by the impertinent questioner. "The *why*, feller, is, because it was *Ike Drew* that had it!"

"But what's all that to me?" said Stam. "Does Jim and Pete want me to go and take the box from Ike?"

"Here's what they want," said Peggy: "they've made it up to set for Ike to-night and kill him!"

"And that's the only way it can ever be got from Ike Drew!" said Nancy. "He'll never give it up as long as his heart beats!"

"You see, Stam," said Peggy, "Ike knowed that if he should stand, it would be him aginst *two*; and that warn't all, for he didn't want it to be knowed what he had. I know how it is as well as if I had been there and seen it: when he got well back into the thicket, he picks out his place and buries the box, aimin' to go back there to-night and get it; and

when all that's done, here he goes back to the beach empty-handed,—that's so ; for it ain't long before here comes Ike, sure 'nough, up to the gig where Jim and Pete is, makin' b'lieve he hadn't seen her before. But they didn't let on, for they warn't the ones to be fooled that way. Now, what they're goin' to do is to set to-night in the path that passes around close to the foot of Kill-Devils, and take him as he comes along. And they're willin', Stam, to let you in for a chance, providin' you helps : and that's what I've come to tell you."

"Tell 'em he'll be one with 'em!" said Nancy. "*He'll* be there! Ha, Stam, that Ike Drew's a devil; and you've got to watch him close, or you won't git nothin', and, besides, *you'll* be the one to be toted back, and not him. Gold? a box full of gold?—he'll be there! No, there ain't but one way to git that box from Ike Drew. But he'll be there, Peggy!"

"Gold?" screamed Kate, in a frightened tone, as she dropped the net from her hand and sprang excitedly to her feet: "gold?—*but one way to git it?* Maybe it *ain't* gold. No, no, it ain't *gold!* How could gold git from the ship to the beach? gold's heavy,—*it can't float!* It ain't gold,—I know it ain't *gold!*"

No sooner had Kate uttered the first word than all eyes were turned toward her. Never before had she dared to express an opinion in opposition to that of Nancy. And now so great was the astonishment of the grim tyrant at the presumption of her whom she had ever held in the most abject bondage, that, for a time, she could only sit and stare with wild, protruding eyes at the terrified offender,—aye, terrified, though while she spoke her eyes were fixed upon the demon face before her.

"And how comes it that *you* know so much?" said Nancy, as she rushed forward and dealt a blow upon the offender's head that sent her reeling back upon the stool from which she had arisen. "*I know it is gold!*"

"Devil!" said Stam, rising from the chest and advancing toward his mother, "I've seen enough of sich doin's as this, and it's got to stop,—*it's got to stop here!*"

"Has it?" said Nancy, fiercely; "then larn her, Stam Weathers, to keep her mouth shut!"

The visitor, who had not once arisen from her seat, at seeing this burst forth in a loud, hoarse laugh. Such scenes were too familiar with her to carry terror with them; but, on the con-

trary, their effect was to excite her vulgar merriment to the highest pitch.

"Nothin' like spunk, Nancy," she said; "matters not what the odds is, stand up to it; but then, Stam, you'd better let me have that little monkey you've got there in your arms till you gits through, for he'll be in your way when the old gal gits to clawin' sure 'nough."

Stam, in his passionate excitement, had forgotten that he held the child in his arms; and the instant mention was made of it his eyes were turned toward its pale face: that instant his resolution changed, and he turned and went back toward the chest. For a time he stood there as if undecided what to do. "Here, Kate," he said, at last, "take this youngun; for I can't stay here no longer, or worse'll come. It's best I should go away."

Kate raised her head from her knees where it had been resting and looked vacantly toward her husband, as if she had not fully understood his words.

"Come, Kate," Stam repeated, in a gentler and somewhat sorrowful tone, "take him, for I must be off."

She arose and went; for then she understood,—then she realized that her husband's intention was to go and leave her there with those whose delight would be to mock at her distress; but, as she received the child into her arms, she whispered, "Don't go!"

"What shall I tell Jim?" asked the visitor, as she rose and turned toward the door as if about to depart.

"Why, tell him," said Nancy, again answering for her son, "that he'll be there. It's time, Stam, to be gittin' ready, too, for it's duskish now; and night ain't long comin' on after it starts, sich a day as this. Tell him Stam'll be there soon as he gits his gun loaded, and can walk from here there."

Stam seemed not to have heard a word that his mother had spoken, for no sooner had he placed the baby into Kate's arms than it groaned deeply and became restless, as if it were about to awake. He had been standing there gazing earnestly and feelingly down into its face, and was now only waiting for it to become quiet before taking his departure. But the child became continually more restless, and it showed from the contortions of its face that it was suffering intense pain. He reached out his arms and received it again, and began walking

with it back and forth across the floor. In a little while it closed its languid eyes and again dropped off to sleep.

"What shall I tell Jim?" asked Peggy again. "Is you goin' to take chances with him and Pete, or not?"

Stam paused, and looked into the questioner's face. "Tell him," he said, "if two like them ain't enough to take one like Ike, they'd better give the bizness up, for they are cowards, and only wants another to do their ugly work for 'em."

"Then they'll go without you," said Peggy. "But any fool ought to know that two's better than one, and three's better than two, for sich work. Ike's a supple feller, and it ain't goin' to be no easy job to handle him, if he should find out what's to pay in time. But then Jim Beam and Pete *can* handle him for all that. It looks to me, Stam Weathers, as if Jim and Pete wouldn't have to go far for company, if they *is* cowards!"

"He's goin'!" said Nancy, as she reached up and took the long gun from its rack over the door. "I'll load her up for you, Stam; and when I puts in a load, all you'll have to do, to fetch the game, will be to aim true and pull the trigger. But mind, you've got to watch close and keep your ears open, or you mought git the wrong one after all, for it's goin' to be dark to-night; and watchin' and hearin' sich a night as this is goin' to be won't be no little thing to do, neither! Dark!—there won't be no moon to-night; and—listen!—don't you hear a racket? The wind'll be howlin' and squealin', and the trees bendin' and shakin' and crackin'. Hell's darkness and hell's music will be out there in that woods to-night, Stam; and much else can't be heard, when they're about! Yes, watch close, and listen close, too; for, besides all the rest, the devil hisself will be out there!"

"But tell me, Stam," persisted Peggy, "is you goin' or not? I'll go back and tell Jim, so he'll know what to count on."

"Goin'?—in course he's goin'!" said Nancy. "Is Stam Weathers afraid of Ike Drew? He ain't none o' mine if he is; for I tell you, Nancy Weathers ain't afeerd of the man that lives,—no, nor of all the devils in hell besides! If Stam has got any o' my blood in him, he ain't no coward; and if he ain't a coward, then he ain't afeerd, even of Ike Drew! Go, Peggy, tell Jim Stam'll be there; yes, Stam Weathers will be one to set in that path to-night!"

"Here, Kate," said Stam, "take this baby: if I'm goin' there ain't much time to spare, for it's gittin' kind o' dusky now."

Again the mother received her child into her arms. Her face was ashy pale, and, in spite of all her effort to suppress it, a deep groan came forth from her sorrowing heart. "Is you goin' away, and leave me and baby so, Stam?" she asked.

"You know how it is, Kate," said Stam; "you know that this kind of business don't suit me, for I ain't never been used to it. But what can I do but go? Yes, Kate, I *must* go."

"Oh, stay, Stam; stay here!" she said. "It'll be dark and stormy to-night,—dark and stormy; the wind'll be howlin' through the woods, and the trees'll be cryin' and creakin' so,—stay with us! S'posin' you should kill Ike to-night, or s'posin' he should kill you!"

"Don't be playin' baby till night comes on, Stam Weathers," said Peggy, "for I wants to know if you're goin'. If you're afeerd to go, say so, and that'll be the eend of it; or if you're goin' say so, so as I may go and tell them that sent me."

"Who'll say I'm afeerd to go?" said Stam, angrily. "Let me tell you, Peggy Strubl, that I ain't afeerd to go where Jim Beam or Pete can, nor to undertake what any one or both of 'em together will undertake; and them that says I is, lies!"

"It looks as if you is," said Peggy; "but that ain't much to wonder at, for one that's got sich a chicken-livered wife as you is."

It was well that Stam had paid no attention to these remarks. During their utterance his whole mind was centred upon the child, who was groaning and breathing heavily, and at times catching and starting as if it were about to go into convulsions. Sometimes it would open wide its eyes, and gaze vacantly up into its father's face; then it would pucker up its face as if it were about to scream aloud; and all the time it was sighing and moaning deeply. Silently the father and mother stood and gazed into the little face, seeming for the time to forget all else. The girl, too, stood there looking sadly on, yet uttering not a word. Poor Gilsey! she had long ago learned the danger of undertaking to express *her* opinion about anything, or even to speak, unless she should be first spoken to.

"This baby's powerful sick," said Stam, at last; "see, how he's catchin' and pantin'! I don't much think, Kate, he'll live to see the night out. Be easy with him when I'm gone; it's best he should sleep if he will, for it's but little good sound sleep that he gits nowadays."

"He always does best when you're about," said Kate, tremulously; "and if he should come to hisself agin, and you not be here, it'll be worse for him; I know it will. S'posin' he should die when you are gone! Oh, stay here with us this time; just *this* time, Stam!"

"How long is you goin' to stay there hangin' round that baby?" asked Nancy, impatiently: "don't you see night's comin' on? Here, take this gun; you may count on her now, for *I've* had her, and I know what's in her; all you've got to do is to pull the trigger, and it's got to be a little thing and a long way off besides if you don't hit it somewhere. Come, come; don't stand there nussin' that youngun forever, or you'll be too late after all. Old as I is, I ain't never seed a man yet that was worth a cuss that stayed in the house half his time nussin' babies. Stam, Ike Drew has got to be watched close to-night, remember that, or you'll not git what you're goin' after, and maybe never come back yourself neither."

"There, hold him that way, Kate; sorter up like, with his head layin' on your bosom; that's right, let him lay so, and kinder keep up his head with the other hand. Don't lay him in the bunk by hisself, for he's bony and it hurts him. When you gits tired o' holdin' of him that way, ease him down quiet like in your lap; and when he gits to frettin', sorter swing him a little from one side to t'other. You and Gilsey will have to spell one another along as one gits tired, but don't lay him in the bunk by hisself. Mind him keerful, Kate, till I gits back. I must be off now, for night's comin' on. Keerful till I gits back,—*till I gits back,—Kate!*"

"Ain't you ready?" asked Nancy, fiercely.

"Yes," said Stam, turning towards his mother; "I'm ready now; ready to do what you says do; ready, if I goes to hell for it!"

"Ha, ha!" laughed Peggy Strubl; "Stam is a man, I do believe."

Stam took down his tarpaulin coat from the joist and drew it on; then the souwester was arranged with its long flap hang-

ing upon his back, and, taking from his mother's extended hand the gun, he passed out of the door and away.

"Mind you, Stam," called Nancy, "keep the lock under your coat so the primin' won't git wet, for it's best not to have a flash in the pan when the time comes to pull that trigger."

"And mind *you*," said Stam, as he turned his dark face towards her that had spoken, "when we both gits in hell, the biggest part of the pay for this job will be comin' to you!"

Rude as had been Stam's life, yet his heart had known joys, for he loved his wife and child with a warm and tender love. When they were near he could be patient, for hope then was ever whispering to him of peace that would be his in a coming day, however sad the trials of the present. But hope had departed now, and all was darkness; aye, the darkness within his bosom now was a thousandfold deeper and more drear than that that was ever increasing around him as he wended his solitary way down the path toward the hut of Jim Beam. It was not long before he reached the hut and found Jim and Pete impatiently waiting for him, and forthwith the three made their way through the gloomy woods toward Kill-Devil Hill, five miles distant to the northward.

For some time after Stam left, Kate continued to sit there on the chest, not weeping, not even sighing, yet oh, how disconsolate! He that she loved as well as her poor ignorant heart could love,—he had gone forth, possibly never again to return to her and his child, or, if he should return, to bring upon him stains of blood of a fellow-creature. Dark indeed was the life before her now; the angel that had all along so lovingly sustained her had spread her wings and flown away, and now she was left without a comforter.

"How long is you goin' to set there like a fool, with your head hangin' down?" asked Nancy. "And there you sets side of her, like another fool, Gilsey. Is any o' your folks dead, that your face should stretch a yard long and your eyes stick out and stare like crabs' eyes? Give her that baby, Kate, and go at your work! When is that net to git done if you keeps on settin' there on that chist? Git up, I say, both of you!"

Kate started to her feet at the sound of that dreadful voice, and, obeying the command, placed the child in Gilsey's arms,

staring wildly about as she did so, and looking as one who has just aroused from some frightful dream. An instant she stood trembling, then, rushing to the door, she screamed, "Stam! Stam!"

"You'll have to call louder'n that," hissed Nancy, fiercely, through her clinched teeth, as she ran forward with upraised fist,—“louder'n that, or he won't hear you, as much racket as there is goin' on out there.” But Kate had darted from the door before the angry hag reached it, and was speeding rapidly away in the direction that her husband had taken; nor did she halt or slacken her speed until she had reached the hut of Jim Beam. She was wild, frenzied, and oh, what curses she had prepared, as she went flying along, to heap upon the heads of those who had invited her husband to join with them in their devilish adventure! She did not even pause at the door when she had reached it, but, bursting through it with a maniac's strength and fury, halted first beneath the dingy roof. Stam was not there; no one was there; all had gone!

Again she stood and called loudly her husband's name, but still there came no answer; no voice was heard; no sound but the tumult of the wild tempest. Then she sat upon the step of the door, and, burying her fevered face in her hands, moaned as only one can moan who writhes beneath the torturing lash of despair.

"And has you found him?" screamed an angry voice.

The terrified woman looked up, and Nancy Weathers stood before her.

"Oh, tell me, tell me, for God's sake, where he is!" gasped Kate.

"Git up from there, hussy," said Nancy; "now! *now!* right back! quick! before I scatter your brains here on the sand!"

"Oh, call him back! call him back!" pleaded Kate, "before he does what you've sent him to do! He'll git gold for you; I'll git it; we won't git nothin' but gold, and it'll all be yourn; more, a hundred times more, than Ike's got in that box,—and it'll *all* be yourn!—and then, if we can't git enough, kill me; kill him; kill baby too! but, oh, call him back home now!"

Nancy deigned no reply, only her burning eyes shone full upon the pleading face of Kate, as she beckoned her on homeward.

Poor Kate had not the power to withstand the demon's dreadful charm, and silently she turned and retraced her steps, followed closely by her whose words now were few, and they bitter curses from a cruel heart.

CHAPTER IV.

IKE TELLS OF THE WRECK IN THE OFFING.

"WELL, you *have* got her!" said Peggy Strubl, laughing uproariously as Nancy came following Kate into the door. "The best you can do now is to tie her, or like as any way she'll be off ag'in. And next time she moughtn't be come up by so handy."

"Come up by!" hissed Nancy; "yes, she'd be come up by *next* time, too; that is, she'd be come up by *some* time, and after that she'd be broke of runnin' off! No, I ain't a goin' to tie her. Go set down there, you warmint, and tie that net!"

"Well, do as you're a mind to," said Peggy; "but listen to me: next time she gits away Ike Drew'll know what's goin on, for that's just what she's after."

"I'll risk that, too," said Nancy; "for I tell her now (and she knows well enough that I mean what I say) if she does tote news off to Ike, she'll never tote no more to him or anybody else:—yes, I'll send her with a word to him myself, and she'll have to travel through a darker way than the path through this woods, too, for Ike'll be in a dismal place before the sun rises ag'in!"

"Well," said Peggy, again laughing boisterously, "North Banks needs trimmin' out about as bad as any place, I guess, and it's as well to begin the work to-night as any time."

"And it's as well to begin at Ike Drew's house as anywhere," said Nancy. "It'll be cooler here when that devil gits farther off. It'll be like tackin' out where there's more sea room. Ike Drew's a bad rock; and somehow or other, steer as you will, it's always right before the bows."

"Ike Drew!" said Peggy, rising excitedly to her feet and

scowling darkly as she spoke. "Ike Drew! Cuss his heart! Yes, it's best to begin with him! Ha! I've had my plans laid for him this many a day. His time has come at last, for Ike Drew'll die to-night! But the devil wouldn't die as easy as he's a goin' to, if I could have things like I want 'em, for I'd take him, 'live like he is, and feed him away, piece by piece, to the dogs, leavin' his heart for the last! Ike Drew! What's it to Ike Drew if Jim Beam is a nigger? What's it to *him* if Pete's a nigger, too? And what's it to him if Pete Beam is my youngun? If I'm a mind to have twenty nigger babies how does that pester him, and what's he got to do with it? Is he to cuss Jim and Pete, and to mammock me when he likes for that? Cuss his heart! It's blacker than Jim Beam's face, black as *that* is! Ain't Jim Beam or Pete Beam as good as *Ike Drew*? Ain't Peggy Strubl as good? Cuss Ike Drew!"

A fiendish smile was upon Nancy's face while she stood looking at the furious woman, and listening attentively to every word she uttered. "That's so," she said; "Ike Drew is a devil, and he's got a black heart; but as to that, Jim Beam's heart and face is both black, and if straws was to be drawn for the best man it would be about the same whether the long or the short straw should be drawn, for it's a yard with one and three foot with the other."

"What's these old scoggins tryin' to hatch out now?" asked a man, who for some minutes had been standing unperceived at the door with his head protruding in. "I should say it was best to be partickler and not bounce too high, honeys, or you mought break your eggs; and then just think of the mess! Ike Drew's a devil, is he, purty Peggy? 'Twouldn't do to call *you* by sich a ugly name as that, would it? And Ike Drew's a *devil*, is he, sweetheart Nancy? *You* ain't though!—You sharks! You devil-fish! Ike Drew's a devil, is he; but Jim Beam is a nigger? No rubbin' the black off there, is there, purty Peggy? And Jim Beam and Pete Beam is, ary one, as good a man as Ike Drew, eh? Liar! Can't I lick the life out o' Jim, with Pete throwed into the barg'in? *You know!* Now come, honey, let me hear you say that Jim Beam's as good a man as Ike Drew, and I'll fetch you out here and grease this door-block with your brains, you stingeree!"

"Go off and let me alone, Ike Drew," said Peggy, in a terrible fright. "I ain't pesterin' you, is I?"

"Ain't pesterin', eh? The next time my ears fools me will be the first time. Now maybe it's best for you to believe that I've got my eyes on you and that lampus there by you, too! Where's Stam Weathers, Kate?"

"Stam Weathers?" said Kate, trembling and gasping for breath. "Stam Weathers? Oh, yes,—Stam—Stam Weathers! He's gone, Ike, he's gone—gone up the beach. He went up the beach a spell ago."

"He's gone about his business!" said Nancy, defiantly.

"Is he, honey," said Ike, as he stepped in at the door and went hurriedly toward the hag and thrust his face within a foot of hers; "maybe he's gone to look for more drowned ones to drag up and bury in the sand; but then six ought to be enough for one day. Yes, like as any way he's got it into his head that the gig had more'n six for a crew, and he's gone to look for the rest of 'em. But, then, who's been pesterin' *you*, and gittin' you to look so ugly, pidgin? It's a pity for your looks to be spi'lt that fashion! Who's pestered you?"

Nancy opened her mouth to speak, but the terrible eyes that were glaring into hers warned her to remain silent, and she turned her sullen face away towards the fire.

Ike paused until he saw that no reply was to be made; then he turned towards Kate, and again asked, "Where's Stam?"

"Stam? Where's Stam?" she said. "Ike, I don't know; all I knows is he's gone up the beach, like I told you,—that's all I knows. Maybe he's gone to look about for wrecked things, or maybe he's gone to Kill-Devils, to keep a watch in the offin'; maybe he is gone to look for more drowned ones, like you says, for Stam allers buries them fust; but then I don't know, Ike."

"Look out o' that door, Kate," said Ike, in a rage; "kind o' dark, ain't it? And so Stam's gone to look for wrecked things, or keep a watch out in the offin', or find dead ones to bury, eh? Did he take any spectickles along? If he didn't, he won't see much, will he? Now, Kate, you know well enough you're lyin'. Stam Weathers couldn't no more see nothin' to-night than if his head was inside of a jug. Come, then, tell me what's to pay; if you don't, I'll choke the life out o' you! What's goin' on, Kate?"

"Ike," said Kate, in a pleading tone, "don't hurt me for

not tellin' you what I don't know. Stam started up the beach a spell ago, and that's all I knows."

Poor Kate! she stood there, pale, and quaking with fear, before the searching gaze of that dreadful man, who had guessed well that she was uttering untruths, but who, now that she had spoken again, began to doubt.

For a time he stood with an angry but puzzled expression upon his face, and only gazed in silence at the frightened woman. Gradually the dark frown grew less dark; yet still he continued to stand there and gaze. Hard and cruel as was his heart, there still remained in it a tender spot. Battered and torn as it had been by the storms of life, still there remained a chord that had not been snapped, though long it had been musicless. Now Pity's fingers softly trilled that chord, and the dark-browed man stood listening—listening to whispered music.

"Is that so, Kate?" he said, at last. "Well, maybe it is. I guess he's heerd of the wreck that hove in sight a spell ago, and has gone to get a soon chance at her. But she won't come on to-night; *that is, if she's let alone.*"

Nancy started. "Wreck? Is a wreck comin' on, Ike?" she asked.

"*Wreck?*" Ike said, mocking the hag's voice, and mimicking her movements of surprise, and at the same time stooping forward with his face near to hers, and gazing fiercely. "Yes, devil, a wreck's comin' on."

"Come, now, Ike," said Nancy, in a coaxing tone. "There ain't no use gittin' mad and stayin' mad. Is she loaded, Ike?"

"*Is she loaded, Ike?*" the man said, repeating her words in a womanly voice, and, as he spoke, putting one hand on the back of her head, and slapping her forcibly in the mouth with the other. "There, keep that dirty thing shut, or I'll make you up into a cake softer than a jelly-fish! Hear me?"

Again Nancy turned her eyes, that were now blazing with anger, toward the fire, and was silent.

"Didn't Stam know that the wreck was comin' on before he started up the beach, Kate?" asked Ike. "Come, no lies!"

"No, Ike. He didn't know nary thing about it. I know he didn't, for he didn't say a word about it. All I heerd him say was, that there was a ship not fur behind the gig that stranded at Kill-Devils last night. No, he didn't know that a wreck had hove in sight. Did you see her, Ike?"

"No. Sol Curt seed her from the top of Kill-Devils."

"What was she?" Kate ventured to ask. "Was she loaded?"

"Sol says he watched her as long as he could see her, but he couldn't make out much. She's well out; her masts is all gone; she was under a jury-mast, driftin' slow to s'uthard, creepin' to'ards shore. She's got some load in, but she was too far away and the weather was too thick to tell much. It was only once in a while that she could be glimpsed at all. It's dark out there now, Kate, and if the ship should happen to jibe,—but as to that, them that's got the tiller is wastin' time tryin' to keep her off the beach, for this wind ain't goin' to change between this and to-morrow night, and one little sail won't do. They'd just as well turn her bows on, and have it over with."

"S'posin' she should jibe?" Kate asked. "Would——"

"Would she come on?" said Ike, taking it for granted that that was the question intended to be asked. "Why, yes, that would bring her on *quicker*; jibin' would git 'em tangled up, and it's like enough, before they could git her luffed up right agin, she'd be gone. Don't you see? It's blowin' and heavin' out there, Kate, and *ain't* it black! Ever foul her, and she's gone. Kate, that craft'll be high and dry before daylight; but Stam must be here to go with me."

Kate had a double purpose in making the inquiries she did about the coming wreck. She had gained her point in bringing Ike to believe that she did not know where Stam had gone; and now she hoped that by engaging him in conversation upon the subject in which she well knew he felt deep interest, his anger might by degrees so cool down as that she would have less apprehension of acts of violence from him. She also knew that Peggy and Nancy were only deterred from making the inquiries that she was making by their fear of Ike; and she hoped to gain *their* favor by the course she was pursuing. Her quick eye observed that at times the grim face of Peggy would lighten up almost into a smile; and that Nancy, far the more nervous and restless of the two upon whom the injunction of silence had been laid, was several times on the very eve of forgetting herself and asking a question; but, though her lips might have the question that she desired to ask upon them, she would remember the

dreadful order in time, and instantly resume her expression of fierce sullenness.

But when Ike came to speak of the heaving of the seas, and the blackness of the night, and the effect of the ship's jibing, it required the greatest effort on the part of both Nancy and Peggy to restrain the laugh of wild exultation and gladness, and they moved from side to side trembling and convulsed. And this continued until he spoke of the certainty of the ship's stranding before daylight; then in an instant they caught his dark meaning, and knew why he had come for Stam, and then Nancy sprang to her feet.

"I can help you about the lights, Ike, as well as Stam!" she said. "Ha! ha! I can work like a man, Ike, and you'll see it!"

"Devil!" said Ike, advancing and holding his clinched fist near the woman's face, "open that mouth another time! You know where Stam's gone; there's deviltry out, and you know what it is. I've been seein' it in your eyes. You know it, and that she-devil there knows it. Somethin's wrong to-night; I see that plain enough; and both of you knows what it is! Peggy, where's Jim and Pete?"

"For what I knows," said Peggy, "they're home; I left 'em there."

"*I've been there!* Kate, you've lied to me; I see it now: you know things is wrong! What is it?"

"Ike," said Kate, "may I go look for Stam? Maybe so I may find him; and then when he comes you'll find that nothin' ain't wrong."

"Where is he?" said Ike; "tell me, or I'll kill you!"

"Oh, Ike, let me go out and look for him! Maybe I shall find him: its dark, but maybe I shall find him, if you'll let me go!"

"Go, then!" thundered the enraged man. "Go! You know where he is! He's with Jim and Pete; and you know where *they* is, and what they're out for. Go!"

Kate darted toward the open door, keeping her frightened eyes fixed upon the man as she went.

"Wait!" he said, before she had crossed the threshold; "tell him to meet me at Whale's Jaw.—Away now!"

Kate heard no more. She leaped from the door, and, with the swiftness of a bird, sped away through the gloom; nor

did she for an instant pause until she had crossed the reef to the hard, smooth beach and felt the rushing waters upon her feet and ankles. There she paused, and, in an agony of terror, screamed with all her might,—aye, wildly, frantically screamed.

The darkness that hung around her like the pall of death was utter; loud was the solemn booming of the surf; doleful the tempest wails; but more than these she feared the man from whose presence she had flown,—the man whose hands and whose soul were reeking with human blood. Had the grinning form of death appeared before her then, she would not have shrunk from it; but oh, death at the hands of Ike Drew! Her screams were drowned in the tumult of the tempest, and even she herself heard them not.

She paused not long, for the thought came—suppose the fiend from whom she had flown had followed; suppose even now he should be near by and reaching out his eager hands through the darkness! Again she sped away, now up the dreary beach; but oh, where should she find Stam!

CHAPTER V.

KATE GOES OUT INTO THE DARKNESS TO SEEK HER HUSBAND.

FROM the very dawning of her reason, Kate Weathers had known no other life than that of hardship and privation. And yet she was not on that account so great a sufferer, for she knew not of the existence of any better mode of living than that of her own. Here, upon and near the barren sea-coast, she had lived from early childhood; here all her days as far back as the range of recollection extended had been spent; here she had grown to womanhood and become a wife and mother; and here she dwelt still, with never a thought to enter her mind but that here, in course of time, she should die, and then in a brief space be forgotten. She knew, ignorant as she was, that the pent-up territory upon which she dwelt

was not all of the world, for she could look out on one hand and see the green islands of the sound, and in the distance the dark line of mainland; and she had been told that beyond the ever-heaving billows of the great deep, that reached away and away on the other hand, were lands of beauty, where multitudes of people dwelt; where were houses higher than the hills near her humble home; where, instead of desert waste, were towering forests and flowery vale and hill, and fields of grain and fruits; and yet her notions, based upon what she had heard, nay, her ideas of everything in life, were crude and for the most part false.

She had heard much about hell, and she feared it, for she was sure it must be a place of pain and unrest; a place where the worst class of the dwellers upon earth go after death. Faint glimmerings too of a happy land beyond the grave she had; but her pictures of heaven were mere dim outlines filled in with tinted figures that were undecided and uncertain, and yet she loved the faint pictures and was ever trying to comprehend them,—ever hoping that the sunlight would flood more brightly upon them and bring them out more distinctly. She remembered as in a dream having been told of God: that he is good and the Author of all good; that he is the Maker of all things,—the world and all that is in it; the sun, the moon, and stars, and the blue sky. More than once she had seen the shipwrecked kneel in the sand and thank that great God for deliverance from death; yet how the sight would cause her to gaze, and to wonder how He that lived away up in the blue sky could hear words so feebly said! and how intently she would listen to the words of thanksgiving as they were poured forth from glad hearts, though she knew so little of their meaning!

She remembered that once—a long, long time ago—a fair blue-eyed girl was among the wrecked. Many came with her through the raging surf, but, of all of them, she alone was remembered. She remained on the desolate strand until other beautiful beings came; with these she departed, and never again was she seen. But morning and evening while she stayed she came to embrace and kiss her, and to kneel with her and ask God's blessings upon them. How well she remembered the radiant face,—its expression of peace when the blue eyes were raised heavenward! and how well she remembered the silvery

tones of her speech! Often after the fair girl passed away she would feel the thrill of gladness at her heart that she felt when the soft hand rested upon her head. Often she would call to remembrance the gentle-toned pleadings for God's protection and mercy. The music of that voice would never be forgot,—even the words were remembered; they were of God and heaven, of realms of beauty and peace, and of the glad beings that have their dwellings in those realms. At times all seemed as a dream that she had had in childhood, yet she *knew* that it was real; that calm, glad face, those soft eyes, the golden hair, the fair hands, the graceful form,—it could not be a dream. And yet it was all so long, long ago that now the beautiful girl and the glad heaven that she told of were so blended that she could not separate them,—the heaven could only be remembered by remembering the beautiful being that told of it.

With hell and its spirits of evil she had grown familiar, for of these she had heard much; of these she had heard most when strife and hatred were deadliest. And now, as she sped up the beach through the roar of the dark tempest, she could not think of much but hell, and more than once she paused to wonder whether, indeed, she were not already one of its dark spirits wandering she knew not whither. Oh, the horrors of a long existence such as this! Could hell be more dreadful? Oh, where would be rest for her?

Not a ray came from any quarter to relieve the utter blackness of the night, except the ghostly glimmerings that were flashed through the raging surf; no ray but these, and these but rendered more dreadful the reigning gloom: tumult and turbulence led on their angered hosts in mad array, ceaseless and wild were ocean's boom and roar, frightful the region of unrest, tireless the tempest's screaming, one endless wail the music of its march!

Frenzied with horror, she paused in her mad flight. She *would* be calm. She would wait there until she had collected her scattered thoughts and settled upon some more certain course to pursue.

Poor Kate! she stood there in the deep gloom pressing her hands upon her throbbing temples and trying to recall the recent past,—trying to persuade herself that now at last she was calm. It was a hard task that she had undertaken, and

yet she *would* be reasonable; she *would* remember the true state of her case and be calm. Ike Drew had driven her out into the darkness to look for Stam. She remembered leaving the hut in the thicket and flying across the reef to the sea-shore; she had paused there and screamed in terror, then sped on; she was standing now on the hard beach near the bursting billows, the barren reef with its plain and hills and vales, and beyond these, towards the sound-side, the tangled thickets lay stretching along on her left hand; she felt the fierce winds that were howling in from the sea; she was staggering and leaning against them, they were waving and fluttering reefward her long hair and scanty garments; great clouds of spray were constantly streaming in from the ocean, drenching her as they came. Then she remembered Stam's starting out upon his mission of death,—she doubted not that he was waiting now in the path near Kill-Devils for Ike to come. Ah, yes, she remembered all now, and she would be calm. Yet, where should she find Stam? How should she find him in the dreary gloom? Familiar as she was with hill and dale, and with every path through the thicket, she knew not how to find them now; and how should she, who knew not where she herself was, be able to find Stam?

Her hands were still pressed upon her temples. Stam was in the path at the foot of Kill-Devil Hill, at the edge of the thicket. She would have no difficulty in finding the thicket, for the wind was bearing directly towards it; she would cross over to it and trace its edge along; it was the best she could think of to be done.

Kate had not been tracing along the edge of the thicket long before she began the ascent of a hill. Upon reaching the summit she began calling the name of her husband; but it was as when she had screamed at the ocean shore,—she could not even hear her own voice. Then she thought that by descending on the thicket side of the hill the tumult of noises that came from the sea would be to some extent shut off, and that possibly she might make herself heard; and then it might be that *this* was Kill-Devil Hill that she was on, and if so, she was very near her husband; so again she turned in the direction of the thicket; but she had gone but a few steps before she came to the steep brink (for the wind had been blowing so long from the sea that the sound-side of the hills had become

almost perpendicular), and the loose sands caving beneath her feet, she went rolling and tumbling the distance of nearly a hundred feet to the bottom of the valley.

It was several minutes before she recovered sufficiently from her surprise to attempt to arise; but as she had received no injury from the soft, yielding sand she arose to her feet and called, "Stam!"

Here the sounds of her voice were comparatively distinct, and she called again with all her might, "Oh, Stam!"

"Who are you?" asked one who was but a few feet distant from her, and who seemed to be rapidly advancing: "Ike, Ike Drew!"

Kate heard the click of the cocking gun; only an instant of time was hers. "Oh, Stam," she said, "don't shoot me! It's me, Stam!"

"Kate!"

"Yes, Stam, it's me."

"You, Kate! My God! Little more and I'd a shot you! she was cocked and my finger on the trigger! What's brought you out here sich a time as this?"

"I've come for you, Stam."

"Is the baby dead?"

"No, no! Oh, Stam! I'm so glad, so glad, so glad! You ain't bloody yet; and Ike won't be here to-night."

"Won't be here! How do you know that, Kate?"

"He sent me to look for you."

"Ike sent you! How did he know I was here?"

"He didn't know you was *here*, Stam; but he went for you, and I told him you'd gone up the beach. He got mad and driv me out to look for you. He asked me where you was, and I didn't know what to tell him better, so I told him you'd come up the beach to look for wrecked things, or watch in the offin'. I didn't know what else to say; and he was goin' to kill me for lyin' to him——"

"I don't wonder he got mad, Kate, for it ain't much of a time to look about and watch in the offin',—looks as if there never was sun or moon or stars in the sky since it was made. What did Ike say he wanted?"

"He didn't say."

"Did he say anything about Jim or Pete?"

"Yes; he knowed they was gone, too."

"He's found it out!—Was mammy and Peggy there when he come?"

"Yes; and Ike had a full time cussin' of 'em, first thing."

"Has Ike Drew been beatin' of *you*, Kate?"

"No: all he did was to cuss, and do as if he had come there to kill somebody,—seems as he was mad 'cause you was gone."

"Was he by hisself?"

"Yes; I didn't see nobody else about."

"Did he say he was goin' to wait there till I comed back?"

"No; he wants you to meet him at Whale's Jaw."

"At Whale's Jaw?—yes; he's heerd all about it, and he's sot in to kill me; but, Kate, I'd rather it was that way, even if I should git killed, than that he should a come along this path to-night."

"Oh, Stam, Stam! don't kill Ike! You don't want his box of gold. Mammy wants you to kill him, but don't, don't do it!"

"No, Kate, I don't want his gold; nor I wouldn't take it if I should kill him, and he had ever so much,—it ain't his gold, for I don't want that.—It's mammy's talk that makes me feel as if I didn't care for nothin',—for *nothin'*,—not even for you, Kate, and the baby. And what's I to do but go and do like she says?"

"I don't know," she said; "but then if you should kill Ike you wouldn't never have no more peace, and me and baby wouldn't neither. Don't kill Ike, Stam, if mammy *does* say so. Call Jim and Pete in, and le's go back. Don't kill Ike, Stam!—and don't stop at Whale's Jaw neither, but go on home with me, and maybe it'll all come right after all."

"Git close up to me, Kate; I'm goin' to draw the shot and shoot, so as to bring Jim and Pete in."

It was but a few minutes after Stam fired before the click of a cocking gun was heard close by, and Jim Beam's voice was heard: "Was that you shot, Stam?"

"Yes."

"Did you git him?"

"Who shot?" asked a voice on the other hand.

"I shot to call you and Jim in," said Stam. "The game's up; Ike ain't comin' out here to-night."

"How do you know that?" asked the gruff voice of Jim Beam.

"The word's been fetched."

"Who fotch it?"

"Kate's standin' here by me."

"Kate out here?—Kate!"

"Yes, I'm here," said Kate.

"How come you to know that Ike ain't comin'?"

"It was him that sent me to look for Stam."

"You're lyin'!" said Jim. "How come he to know that Stam was here?"

"He didn't know that; but he went to the house, and found he wasn't there."

"Well!"

"Then he driv me out to find him."

"Ike Drew knows who seed him runnin' off with that box; he knows what's goin' on, and it's got the devil in his head. What did he say?"

"He said he wanted Stam."

"What for?"

"To go and meet him at Whale's Jaw."

"Whale's Jaw? Didn't he say for what? I'd as lieve meet the devil at Whale's Jaw to-night as Ike Drew! You'd better watch, Stam!"

"He says there's a wreck in the offin'," said Kate.

"A wreck! Did Ike say so?" asked Jim.

"Wreck?" Pete echoed.

"Wreck, Kate? Did he see her?" asked Stam.

"No; Sol Curt's been all day watchin' out from Kill-Devils; it was him that seed her. She was driftin' to s'uthard, and creepin' in slow."

"It's somethin' about the wreck that he wants to see you for, Stam," said Pete. "Maybe she's goin' to beach at Whale's Jaw. What did Ike say about her, Kate?"

"Sol couldn't see her good; it was misty, and she was a long way out. She's lost all her masts, and they're luffin' of her under one little sail on a jury-mast."

"Was she loaded?" Jim asked.

"Sol couldn't tell; she was too fur away."

"Too fur! Any fool mought a told that she was loaded, or that she wa'nt! Driftin' to s'uthard—movin' in slow—under one little sail? I know she had *some* load, and I ain't seed her. She wouldn't a moved in *slow* if she'd been light."

"Did Ike say when she'd beach?" asked Pete.

"He said if she should happen to jibe to-night she'd come on in a hurry; but, he said, she'd come before day, anyways."

"That's it," said Jim. "Ike knowed! Don't you see, Stam? he wants you to help him to raise lights on Jockey Ridge. Whale's Jaw is right there: that's it! Yes, she can be drawn into the surf before daybreak."

"Maybe there ain't nothin' of it," said Kate. "Maybe there ain't no wreck comin', and he only wants a good chance to kill you, Stam. Don't go to Whale's Jaw; for what you know, he's waitin' there now to kill you. Don't go to Whale's Jaw to-night, Stam!"

"Yes," said Stam, "I'm goin' straight to Whale's Jaw, fust thing. If Ike Drew's after killin' me—well, I can see as fur as he can in the dark!"

"It's a wreck comin'," said Jim; "and Ike's after raisin' lights, that's what it is!"

"If it was me goin' to meet Ike Drew at Whale's Jaw to-night," said Pete, "I should circle 'round a spell before goin' up."

"Don't go there to-night, Stam," said Kate. "Ike's mighty mad."

"Yes, Kate," said Stam, as he poured half a handful of buckshot rattling down the barrel of his gun on the charge of powder that he had rammed home, "I'm goin' straight there from here."

"Oh, Stam!" Kate pleaded, "go on home with me, and don't stop at Whale's Jaw to-night. Sposin' I should go on to the house without you, and find Ike waitin' there for you, he'd kill me."

"Kate," said Stam, "I'm goin' from here to Whale's Jaw. If so be that there's a wreck comin' on, and Ike does want me to help him about raisin' lights on the ridge, I shan't do it; for that business ain't much better than what I've been on to-night, and I'm done with all sich after this. But if he's after killin' me, he may have the chance this very night. When my own mammy calls me coward, I guess I must bear it; but the mouth of no man mustn't do it,—no, no man mustn't do it!"

"Pete and me is goin' on," said Jim. "If all's right, we'll be at Whale's Jaw when you comes, Stam."

"Kate," said Stam, after he had got through loading and priming his gun, "I'm goin' to start now; and you'll have to keep close to me, for if I should lose you, I should never find you no more till day."

"Here's a net-line I've got in my bosom," said Kate; "tie one end 'round your arm, and I'll lead on after you. There! I'm ready now."

"Wait; I've got somethin' to tell you before we goes out where we can't hear one another talk," said Stam. "I don't know how it'll be when we gits to Whale's Jaw, Kate; maybe Ike'll shoot me, or cut me, or somethin'; or maybe I'll do him so; or maybe Ike'll want me to go with him behind the hills, so we can hear one another talk,—for nothin' can be heard there at the beach. But, whatever's done, you must set there where I leave you till I comes to you, or till daylight, for you wouldn't never find your way to the path by yourself to-night. If I shouldn't git killed, I'm goin' on with you:—if I *should*, you must do the best you can, and that's all I can tell you."

"Oh, Stam, Stam!" said Kate, sobbing bitterly, "let's go by this path to the sound-side, and home that way; the wind don't blow so hard there, and we can hear one another talk all the way home."

"*This* path don't go by Whale's Jaw, Kate."

"I know it don't; but the baby's mighty sick, Stam, and sposin' you shouldn't never go to him no more,—nobody can't do for him like you can, not even me. I know he'd die if you shouldn't come,—I should die too, for mammy, and Peggy, and Jim, and Ike, and all would beat me and mammock me if you warn't there; nobody wouldn't care nothin' for me and baby then; what should we do? Oh, what *should* we do?"

"I wish it wasn't like it is, Kate; but maybe it'll come out right yet."

"Stam," she said, while sobbing still, "you're mad with Ike, and when you comes up by him, you'll forgit me and baby. Mammy wants you to kill Ike, but we don't. You're good to us, but nobody else ain't. We don't want for nobody to kill you, nor for you to kill nobody: nor you don't want to kill nobody neither,—I know you don't. Don't go! Your gun's loaded, and this is a dark, black night. You don't want to, but you mought. Don't go by Whale's Jaw! It's better

that mammy should laugh at you, than for you to git killed, or to come home with somebody's blood smeared on you.—Don't, don't go, Stam!"

For a time Stam was silent. "You know, Kate," he said, at last, "what store I sets by you and baby,—*you* know: but I *must* go. I shouldn't never have no peace if I was to sneak home to-night,—seems to me I shouldn't never care for you after that. I *must* go, Kate!"

Kate's heart sunk within her; and yet she lost not hope utterly. "Take hold o' my *hand*, Stam," she said. "I'd rather have a hold o' you than the line, for that'll be closer; and I'm skeered when I gits off from you. Oh, I've been havin' sich dark thoughts to-night! Who is the devil, Stam?"

"The devil? Why it's—it's him that keeps up the fires in hell, I guess; and thunders and rackits about; and pours melted lead into the *little* devils' bellies, and——"

"Where is hell?"

"Hell? Why now you're gittin' too hard for me. I don't know where it is. I should say, though, that it's a place where it's always stormy and cloudy and fiery and smoky, and where everything's allers of a howl and roar; and where the people's ugly; and where they is all the time cussin' and fightin' and yellin':—it's about sich as that I guess. But what's got you to thinkin' sich things, Kate?"

"I don't know," she said; "maybe it's because everything is so black and ugly about. Where does the people that's there go from?"

"The people? Well, maybe some goes from these parts and some from other parts. I should say the devil picks 'em up here and there."

"Does any of 'em go from North Banks?"

"North Banks? How is I to know? I shouldn't wonder, though."

"Is the devil worse'n Ike Drew?"

"There, now! You're too hard for me agin, Kate. But them's odd things for you to be studyin' about!"

"I wish me and you and baby was in heaven, Stam. That's a nice place where there ain't no fussin', and where all goes along smooth and peaceful."

"Is it?" Stam asked. "It is a nice place, Kate, if that's the way of it; but I ain't never heerd no great about it

no way. It ain't like *this* if things goes along smooth and peaceful."

"That's where that pretty one went when she left here; and that's where them purty ones lived that comed for her."

"Kate," said Stam, "all *that* ain't nothin' but a dream you've had in time gone. No sich a purty one as you talks about ain't never been wrecked here as I knows of; and I knows more about sich things than you does."

"No, Stam; I was with her most o' the time. You've forgot her, maybe."

"Well, I don't see how it is, Kate,—I can't see into it: but I know one thing well enough,—if heaven's a nice place, it *ain't* like this; and if hell's a black, fussy place, it *is* like this; and it ain't the best kind of a place to live at, neither."

"I've been thinkin' that too," said Kate. "If it's as dark in hell all the time as it is here now, I should guess there'd be a power of wrecks always beachin'; and if the folks that lives there is all as bad as Ike Drew, there wouldn't be much show for them that should happen to git ashore alive. Just as well they should be drowned,—maybe better."

"But some wouldn't call it a bad place to live at, Kate, if wrecks is always comin' on,—specially if they brings cargoes."

"What would be the good of cargoes if it's allers black and stormy like it is here now, and if all the people there is like Ike Drew?—but then wrecks ain't no good *here* as I sees, Stam. S'posin' money and things is got, what's it all for? I don't never feel glad when I sees a wreck comin' on, for I thinks of what a hard time them that's on her is havin'; and then when she gits in, here, follerin' her, comes the dead ones pitchin' about in the surf, and rollin' up on the sand; their white eyes, their hair all stragglin' about, and their faces lookin' as if they was skeered. It's a mighty pity, and I wish there warn't no storms and wrecks, Stam,—that I do!—Who has most to do with storms and wrecks? ain't it Ike and Jim, and sich?"

"Shouldn't wonder if you're right, Kate. There ain't much good in wrecks, sure 'nough, so far as I sees."

"No; and there ain't much good in them that has most to do with them. Oh, Stam, I'm so glad Ike didn't come for the box!"

"Let go my hand a minit, Kate, and step here behind me. I'm goin' to shoot this load out."

"Goin' to shoot?" asked Kate, in alarm. "Shoot what, Stam?"

"Why, some of the black devils that's all around me. It's better they should git shot than that I should jine with 'em and kill Ike Drew, and that mought be did if the load stays in. There! I shan't never load her to shoot nobody agin, Kate! Come take hold o' my hand now:—seems this gun's twenty pound lighter with that load out!"

Hand in hand the man and his wife passed around the hill, and wended their way across the barren plain to the beach, and down the beach to Whale's Jaw, not once halting or attempting to converse on the way. Only Pete was there awaiting their coming.

Kate seated herself as she had been told to do, and the two men went off behind the ridge to converse.

"The wreck is comin', Stam," said Pete. "Len Curt has come in since Sol come. He's been as fur down as Kittyhawk, where he had a better sight of her. She's a five-hundred-ton ship, and has got a good smart freight in; all her masts is gone, like Sol said, and she's got one jury-mast with a little piece of sail on it. Her rudder's all right, and them that's got the hellum knows how to hold her up, too, for she's creepin' in and to the s'uthard slow as a snail creeps. Len says she was about six mile out when the sun sot, and he thinks by now she's somewheres abreast of Kill-Devils; he says if she was let alone, she'd beach about here, at Whale's Jaw, by day-break; but Ike says she's got a big crew, and maybe passengers, and it's best to bring her on to-night, so as more of 'em 'll git drowned up (which they will do when it's dark like it is now), for he says when so many gits to shore it makes a bother, like it did last time. Him and daddy's up on the ridge now makin' ready to raise lights. There! the lights is goin' up now! Ain't they handlin' of 'em purty! There they comes down; up they goes agin; down agin! It's as nat'ral as if it was a craft ridin' the seas. They've sot up a pole with a pulley-block rigged in the top of it, and all they've got to do is to draw a lantern up and down: half the time the light's hid, and half the time them on the wreck can see it risin' and lowering. There it goes up agin!"

"Jim's helpin' Ike?" asked Stam.

"Yes; and he sent me back to wait for you, and tell you to come up. When we first come up by Ike he swore he was goin' to kill you at sight, but daddy lied to him, and got him right after a spell: he told him that me and you and him come up here a spell before night and spied the wreck, and that we concluded we'd go up the beach and wait for her to come on. It's best to keep in with him, or the devil will be to pay to-morrow, when the ship gits on; somebody'd git killed. We can look for the box when this is over with. Le's go up."

"No," said Stam, "I ain't goin' up; what I stopped for was to see what Ike wanted: I guess it *was* to help about the lights; so I'll go on home."

"But what's I goin' to tell him if you don't come?"

"Tell him I'm gone home, and if he wants to find me partickler he can find me *there*."

"Ike ain't agoin' to let you in for a share to-morrow, Stam, if you don't stop and help about the lights; he's as mad as a devil now, and when I tell him you've gone on, I don't know how it'll be."

"Let it be like it will," said Stam; "I'm goin' home, and that's what you may tell him."

"I'll tell him," said Pete, as he began the ascent of the ridge, "that you've lost Kate, and is lookin' for her. Maybe that'll do. Somethin's got to be told him, or he'll be sure to find out what we've been doin' up the beach, and that would be the eend of somebody!"

Stam returned to the Whale's Jaw, and again taking his wife's hand, they groped their way on home.

CHAPTER VI.

A STRANGER ASKS SHELTER FOR THE NIGHT.

FAMILIAR as was Stam Weathers with every object upon and about the coast in the immediate vicinity of his home, and well as he knew the situation of every hill and valley, and of every path through the thicket, yet it was a full hour after he and his wife left the Whale's Jaw before he succeeded in getting into the path that led to his house, though the distance was less than a mile.

Upon reaching the hut and entering the door, he found that the darkness within was as profound as that without,—not even a coal was smouldering on the hearth.

The lid of the chest was raised, and the flint and steel and tinder were felt for; then, after many abortive attempts, the spark was caught, and it was not long before a tiny blaze was creeping up through the handful of little dry splinters that were bunched in a tangled heap in the middle of the hearth.

The instant the splinters commenced blazing and shedding their feeble light around, Stam arose to his feet and began peering about the room. Kate had entered the door, and was sitting on the chest, leaning forward and holding her hands over her eyes, for, having been for so long a time in utter darkness, even the little, pale light from the hearth was painful to them.

"How's this?" said Stam. "I don't see nobody here!"

"Nobody!" said Kate, starting to her feet, and looking wildly around,—“nobody?”

"Who was here when you left?" Stam asked.

"Who?—Ike, and Peggy, and mammy, and Gilsey, and baby, they was all here. Here's Gilsey in the bunk, but I don't see nobody else."

"Look good, Kate; baby's there with her, I guess. Look good; he's little."

"I don't see him," said Kate, in a frightened tone.

"Don't see him!" said Stam, rushing forward; "to be sure

mammy aint gone and toted him off nowhere a night like this and sick as he is!"

Just as Stam reached the bunk, and was stooping over Gilsey and peering with all his eyes, a bright flame flashed up through the bunch of splinters that rendered everything in the room plainly visible. "Here's the youngun, Kate!" he said. "Gilsey's got him hugged up close in her bosom. See how she's fixed him; she's folded up the kiver and made a soft bed for him, and she's layin' on the naked boards, holdin' his head on her arm. I never shouldn't thought o' that. Say what you will, but it's just as nateral for gals to be mammies as it is for minners to be fish! I'll fix him that way myself next time."

The faces of both the man and wife were lighted with smiles as they stood there stooping forward and looking down at the quiet sleepers.

"How still he is!" said Kate. "It's been a long time since he slept that fashion."

"His head's cold," said Stam; "it is mighty cold. S'posin he's dead! Gilsey! Gilsey!—maybe, though, it ain't nothin' but his fever has left him,—Gilsey!"

The girl started, then stared wildly at the faces above her. "Don't, don't hurt him!" she said, pleadingly; "he's mighty sick, and our folks is all gone. Don't take the baby away!"

"Wake up, Gilsey," said Stam, gently; "don't you see it's us? Where's mammy?"

"Oh, it's you!" said Gilsey. "I thought it were Ike and Granny and Jim that had come to steal the baby away. I dreamt they'd come and got him, and had gone off and kivered him up in the sand, like dead ones is kivered!"

"Where's mammy?" asked Stam again.

"She's gone. Soon as Kate went off, Ike sot in to beatin' her and Peggy, and they all runned out, and I ain't seed 'em since. When they got out o' hearin', I shoved to the door, and come and laid down with the baby, and we went to sleep. None of 'em ain't been back."

"How has it been with the youngun?" asked Kate.

"He had a mighty time of cryin' and catchin' when Ike and them was fightin', and I made sure he was goin' to die, but after a spell he got right and went to sleep; after that he woke up one time, but then I made a light, and walked him up and

down till he got to sleep again ; ever since that I've had his head on my arm, and he's been easy."

"You's a good gal, Gilsey," said Kate.

"God's blessing be with you, good people!" said a man who had come up to the door, and was standing there looking in upon the group: "will you give shelter for the night to a poor unfortunate?"

At the sound of the voice Gilsey sat upright, and, folding the child closer to her bosom, stared toward the door. Kate, who had for hours past been in a state of continual alarm, stepped nervously between the bunk and her husband, and stood there peeping coyly over his shoulder. Stam stood in a defiant attitude, grasping the hilt of the knife that he had not yet drawn from the sheath in his belt, and frowning grimly at the presumptuous intruder,—so were they all for some moments in silence.

"Who are you?" asked Stam, "and what be you here for?"

"I am one," the stranger answered, "who has come to beg shelter for the night from the merciless tempest. Will you not permit me to come in and rest for a few hours?"

"Who *are* you?" persisted Stam, still maintaining his attitude of defiance.

"I am an unfortunate who has been cast upon the beach——"

"What!" said Stam, relaxing his grasp on the hilt of the knife, "has she come on? I didn't look for nothin' like this yet. How long is you been ashore?"

"I came here last night."

"Last night? How?"

"Permit me to come in, kind friend," said the stranger, "for I am very weary. Let me take a little rest beneath your roof, then when I awake I will gladly tell you all you would know; but I am very, very faint and weary now."

"He *does* look tired," whispered Kate; "let him come in, Stam."

"Come in," Stam said, after a moment's pause. "How did you happen to find your way here?"

"By accident," the stranger answered, as he stretched himself at full length on the floor before the fire. "I have been wandering about through the jungle for hours, hoping to come upon a human habitation, but yours is the first that I have

seen in all my wanderings; nor would I have found yours if it had not been for the light shining through the cracks in the house. I thank God that I am again in the company of human beings, for all is desolate enough without."

"Ain't you a hungry?" asked Kate. "There's some fried fish and some 'taters in that pan there in the corner close to your head; take and eat 'em if you wants."

The stranger made no reply, nor even stirred.

"You tell him, Stam," said Kate; "he didn't hear me."

"There's fish and 'taters in the pan," said Stam; "eat 'em, if you're a hungry."

But still no reply was made.

"Think he's gone to sleep in that minnit?" asked Kate.

"Seems as he has," Stam answered. "It don't take one in his fix long to git to sleep when a good place is found for it; but sleep'll do him more good than wittles now. He'll be ready for eatin' when he wakes up, I'm thinkin'. Hold the baby so, Gilsey, 'till I gits this kiver good and warm, then bring him to me, and I'll set here by the fire with him. Lay down there, Kate, and go to sleep, for I know you're a tired."

"There's tea in the bowl, if the youngun should need any," said Kate, as she stepped up into the bunk. "If you needs me call loud, for it won't be long, I'm thinkin', before I shall be sleepin' solid enough; but the bowl's there in the corner close by you."

"I guess I shan't want it," said Stam, "for I've a notion of tryin' him without it a spell. His belly's full of it half the time, and I doubt if it does him much good after all."

In a few minutes after Kate and Gilsey had laid down on the bare boards of the bunk every occupant of the hut, except Stam, was sleeping soundly. He sat on one of the low stools in a corner of the fireplace looking down at times at the child that he held in his arms, snugly wrapped in the quilt, then at the careworn face of the stranger.

Strange thoughts came into the rude banker's mind as he sat gazing down into the face that lay near his bare feet, with its right cheek on the dingy floor, and with the firelight shining full upon it. "Things goes comical," he thought. "Here's this feller, wet as a rat, and tired and hungry besides, where was he a week ago? Maybe layin' in a snug berth, studyin'

about the great things he was goin' to do when he got to his journey's eend, not thinkin' that sich times as this was comin' on. Maybe the whole ship and carger was his'n. What's he got now? Nothin', maybe, but the clo's he's got on, and they ain't been farin' the best lately. I should guess, from the looks of his face, that he feels like one that's about to die before his time comes; but then it is hard to have a whole passel and lose it at a flash like. It's well enough for him that he didn't happen to fall in with Ike or Jim before gittin' here, though, or like as anyway somebody'd been to bury to-morrow. It's like Kate says, 'there ain't much good in wrecks for nobody.'—Here's the youngun catchin' and pantin' ag'in. It's my belief he's goin' to die yet: maybe to-night."

The baby screamed aloud. Its face became pinched and dark, and its limbs rigid. Stam was about to rise from the stool and walk with it about the floor, when the stranger opened his eyes and arose to a sitting posture.

"Your child seems to be quite sick," he said, as he leaned forward and looked into its face.

"And so he *is* sick," Stam said; "'bout to step off, I'm thinkin'."

"Will you let me have him?—possibly I may relieve him."

"No; I guess you needn't bother," said Stam, looking distrustfully at the man. "I guess I'm holdin' him all right, and I can do more for him than anybody else, 'cept it be Kate or Gilsey, and they're asleep, and so tired that I don't want to wake 'em up if I can git along without it.—Maybe he'll git better presently."

"I have a child," the stranger said, "near the age of yours, that was a sufferer for months with a disease that reduced it as yours is reduced. It got so low that even the physician who had been attending it despaired of its recovery. Then, as a last resort, I called in a physician who had the reputation of successfully treating the diseases of children. This man prescribed, and in a short time the child recovered. I kept the prescription as a thing of great value, and have never since left home with the child without having some of the medicine along with me. *This*," he continued, taking a little tin box from his pocket, "contains some of that medicine. I am no physician, and am therefore not certain that your child will

be benefited by taking it; but I am sure that it will not be harmed. Suppose you let me give it one of these powders?"

After considering the matter a moment, Stam placed the child in the stranger's arms. "Try it, if you like," he said; "but it's best you don't hurt him! That stuff ain't pisen, I guess?"

"It will not injure your child in the least," the stranger said. "It is soothing in its nature, and will dispose it to sleep. The little one looks as if it were greatly in need of rest and sleep," he continued, as he received it into his arms; "and I should say that it had been neglected. Have you called in a physician?"

"A what?"

"Has the child been prescribed for?"

"Been *what* for?"

"Has it taken medicine?"

"Oh! now I see what you're drivin' at. Yes, it's had tea enough to cure forty folks, seems to me. I should say, first and last, it's took a schooner-load o' tea, but I don't see as it's done much good."

"What sort of tea has it been taking?"

"Well, now," said Stam, "I don't hardly know where to begin to answer that; it's had root-tea, and bark-tea, and yerb-tea; tea made out'n gum-bark, pillentary-bark, dogwood-bark; then it's had holly-root tea, snakeroot tea, injun-turnip tea, blackberry-root tea, and rush-root tea; now as to yerbs, it's had skull-cap tea, catnip tea, stingin'-nettle tea, break-bone tea, and sage tea; and ever so many cold drinks,—sich as feather-few, rue, wormwood, and oak-o'-Jerusalem. It ain't never wanted for stuff to take. It seems to me, though, it's all for nothin'."

"How long has it been sick?" asked the stranger.

"Nigh on to four months."

"I wonder," said the stranger, "your child had not died three months ago! You may be sure it has a powerful constitution; I think it will recover. Will you treat it as I shall tell you for a time?"

"In course I will," said Stam. "I'm willin' to do the same by you as I does by others; that is, I does what they tells me."

"Then give it no more teas nor cold drinks until I say so," the stranger said. "Will you get me a teaspoon?"

"A what?"

"Have you a cup?"

Stam made no reply, but went and brought from the chest a dingy mug. "Will this do?" he asked.

"Yes; get a little water in it, and a stick to stir with."

Stam did as he was told; and the stranger took one of the little papers of white powder from the box and emptied it into the mug; then, after stirring it with the splinter, he gave it to the child.

"Now take the child and get him quiet," he said, "then lay him in the bunk; he will probably get some hours of good sleep. At the proper time I will give him another powder."

Stam was greatly surprised at what he saw and heard, but especially at the stranger's quiet and confident manner of treating the case.

"Follow my directions," said the man, "and I think you will find what I tell you to be true; your little one needs to be soothed and quieted, and I think it will recover."

The child was soon sleeping soundly, and Stam took it and laid it gently in the bosom of the weary and still soundly sleeping mother.

After standing and watching it a few minutes and satisfying himself that it was doing well, Stam went and stood in the door and looked out. "Why, here it is broad day!" he said. "Shouldn't wonder if I hadn't better be gittin' off,—like as any way she's beached before now."

"*Beached before now!*" echoed the voice of a woman, who was coming up the path toward the hut. "What difference does it make to *you* whether she's beached or not? If she'd come on two hours ago, or if she don't come on for two hours yet, it's all the same to you, so you gits there in time to bury the dead ones. Sich as that, and totin' that little ugly warmint about, is all you cares to do! Stam Weathers! sich another fool as you is can't be found on North Banks!"

"And if you warn't my mammy," said Stam, as he stepped out of the door, "I'd chop the lights out o' you! Now look a here; I was born upwards of forty year ago: I ain't far from a man by this time, and maybe I can get along without

you too. All you does is to cuss and rare on me and everybody else when you takes a notion. You beats Gilsey, and I don't say nothin', if she is my sister's youngun; then you falls afoul o' Kate; and it ain't often I says anything then, though she's my wife, and I knows she ain't done nothin' out o' the way: you sets in to cuss the little youngun that ain't never pestered you; and you calls me coward, and is allus one way or other makin' game o' me. Last night you fussed and cussed till you got tired out; then went off and left the youngun, sick as it was, with nobody to do for it but Gilsey; it mought a died for what you cared; and now, as soon as it's light enough to see, you've come back to cuss and make game and tell me I'm a fool. There ain't but one thing that's kept your heart in your body this long time but only that you're my mammy! Now turn round and go back to Peggy Strubl, or where you're a mind to, for you can't carry on here like you has done no longer,—I tell you you can't do it!"

Nancy, who had got nearly to the door, halted, and stared at her son in mute amazement, for never before had he so grossly rebelled against parental authority. A bitter curse arose from her heart, and was on the lips awaiting to be pronounced as soon as astonishment would permit those angry lips to utter it; but the demon mother was reflected back to herself from the blazing eyes of the demon son, and the curse was held chained to the twittering lips. She turned and passed away without a word.

Kate awoke in time to hear her husband's last words. "What's the matter?" she asked. "What's he been doin'? Where is he?"

"Where is who?" asked Stam, turning toward his wife.

"The man that come last night. What's he been doin'?"

"There he lays, Kate; he ain't been doin' nothin' out o' the way: it's mammy that's been here at the door. She's got to change her ways, too, or she can't come here, that's all!"

"Ain't he woke up yet?" Kate asked, as she sat up in the bunk and looked over towards the stranger, seeming to attach but little importance to the quarrel between Stam and his mother. "He was mighty tired, and looked when he come in as if he could hardly crawl."

"Gone to sleep *agin*, as I live!" said Stam, who was now standing at the fireplace looking into the stranger's face.

"Here he lays just like he did when he first come in. Don't take him long to drop off!"

"Has he been 'wake since he laid down there?" Kate asked.

"Yes; he sot up and give the youngun some stuff that's makin' him sleep as if he was well."

"Where's the youngun?" she asked.

"Where? Why ain't he right there in your arms, Kate?"

"That he is, sure enough! I didn't know it. How come he here?"

"I carried him when he got to sleep good, and lifted your arms easy like and laid him in your bosom."

"What kind o' stuff did he give him,—tea?"

"No; white dusty-lookin' stuff that he totes about in his pocket. I got some water in the mug, and he put the stuff into that and stirred it up, and the baby drunk it. Shouldn't wonder if it warn't a goin' to make him well yet."

"Merciful heaven!" exclaimed the stranger, in a tone of agony, as he bounded to his feet, and then covered his face with his hands. "Lost! lost! lost! Precious wife, precious children,—all, all lost! Oh, my God! All lost! all lost!"

"What's lost?" asked Stam.

At the sound of the voice the stranger dropped his hands, and for a time stared in bewilderment. "Ah," he said, "what a terrible dream it was!"

"Maybe," said Stam, "you've been havin' a kind o' rough time lately?"

"God knows how rough!" the stranger said. "Oh, dear wife and children! has the dark angel indeed swooped down and snatched you all from me! Would that I had been taken too!"

"Is your folks drowned?" asked Kate, in a feeling tone.

"I know not," said the stranger; "I left them on the ship."

"If they warn't drowned when you come off," she said, "may be so they ain't yet; and if they ain't yet, maybe they won't be."

"How did you git ashore?" Stam asked. "Was you all that come?"

"I, with six others, came in the ship's gig," he said; "and, so far as I know, I alone reached the shore alive: I have not seen one of the others since I landed."

"I guess you was all," said Stam, "if you come in that gig; for I dragged up six yesterday and buried 'em in the sand. But how come you seven to leave the ship that way? Why didn't you stay by her with the rest?"

"I will tell you," said the stranger; "for I know you must think it strange that I should have left wife and children in such a predicament."

"As I live," said Gilsey, speaking from the back side of the bunk, "here's the youngun with his eyes wide open a-laughin' at me!"

Kate ran to the bunk to see the joyful sight. "Come, Stam," she said, delightedly; "here he is, turnin' his head toward me, and laughin'!"

"I can't wait no longer now," said Stam to the stranger; "you can say the rest of it when I comes back. When the baby gits to frettin', Kate, git this man to look at him, and see if he don't need more of his stuff. What he's took has done him a sight o' good."

"I do not understand you," said the stranger, with a puzzled look.

"What you give the baby a spell ago has done him good," said Stam.

"Still, I do not understand;—what stuff?"

Stam stared at the man in amazement. "You ain't forgot about takin' some o' the stuff out o' the little tin box in your pocket, and mixin' it in the mug, and givin' of it to the youngun, is you?"

The man opened the box. "Was it like this?" he asked.

"Yes; that's it," Stam said.

"Let me see the mug you speak of."

"Here it is; and you stirred with this splinter."

"Where is the baby?"

"That's him there in the bunk."

"And I emptied one of these powders in the mug, and mixed it, and gave it to your child to drink? When?"

"Before day," said Stam, staring.

"A better thing could not have been done for the child," the stranger said; "but I have no recollection of it: I was asleep. But continue to give the powders at the proper time, and I think your child will recover."

"And you think he'll git well yet?" said Stam.

"I have but little doubt of it," said the stranger, "if proper care be taken with him."

"You're late, Stam," said Len Curt, who was on his way through the path to the beach. "What's the matter? You ain't been out yet. Is anything to pay?"

"The youngun's powerful sick," said Stam, "and I've been stayin' around, sorter tendin' to him like."

"Well, there ain't no use to hurry, I guess, for she's some three miles out yet. She's a smart craft, Stam, and them that's on her knows how to handle the tiller too. They'd save her yet if the wind should happen to shift to west'ard and blow a stiff breeze."

"Seems as Ike's lights warn't for much after all," said Stam.

"Ike's a fool! As if they didn't know well enough what it all meant, when they was in sight of land two hours before night shut in yisterday! Instid of bringin' her in, them lights helped to keep her away. That cap'n's been along by here before this time."

"It's well enough like it is," Stam said.

"What! Well enough she didn't beach?"

"Yes; and it's to be hoped she won't beach. I've about made it up in my mind, Len, that there ain't much good in wrecks after all. What's the good? Some gits things I know, but what's it for? Then look at the dead ones that comes on; and look at the live ones, too, as to that! They fares common enough while they're comin', and after they gits on, too; for if they happens to bring anything with 'em worth havin' they don't keep it long, and they are lucky enough if they ever manages to git back home where they come from."

"Ike Drew and Jim Beam ain't apt to let one git away," said Len; "and sure 'nough it's like you say, for how is they better off than others? Wrecks ain't much good, that's a fact; and come to think of it, I don't know if we here on the banks wouldn't be better off without 'em. I guess you ain't seen Ike since last night? He says he's goin' to pick your flint when he comes up by you, for not helpin' with the lights."

"Does he?" said Stam. "Well, he may have a chance to do it before long. Sometimes the most fire comes from the flint that's picked. I don't want to kill nobody; but then things

mought git into sich a fix that killin' couldn't be holp. He shall have a chance to *pick* before many hours."

Kate, who had for a few moments been standing in the door, overheard what her husband said. "Keep away from Ike, Stam," she pleaded. "Don't kill Ike! Don't go where he is, Stam!"

"I don't mean to hurt nobody that don't pester me," he said; "but Ike Drew has got to keep his place, and Stam Weathers will keep his!"

"They say," said Len Curt, "that Ike's got a box-full of gold hid in the thicket. I guess some folks wouldn't mind killin' him to git that, would they, Stam?"

Stam's eyes met those of his wife. "Is anybody minded to kill Ike for his box o' gold?" he asked.

"Not as *I* knows on," said Len. "Maybe you and Jim Beam and Pete knows that better'n I does."

"Who has told you anything?" asked Stam.

"Nancy Weathers is the one. Ike'll know it,—and then the devil will be raised!"

"Well," said Stam, "she may tell it for what I cares. She may tell it to Ike Drew hisself, and then it'll be 'twixt him and me. The sooner the better, I guess. The Drew that Stam Weathers is afeerd of ain't never showed hisself on North Banks yet! Let her tell! It seems, though, that she that suckled me has a cravin' to lap up the blood of her whelp; let her git ready to do it now, for I swear she may have a chance! yes, she may drink herself full!"

Kate shuddered, for well she knew the man that was speaking. "Stam," she said, in a choking voice. "Stam——"

"Well, I hears you, Kate. Say quick, for I'm about to be off."

"The baby's mighty sick yet, Stam. S'posen he dies. S'posen you was to die, Stam, and wouldn't I be bad off then?"

"I don't know what would come of you, Kate; that I don't. You has it hard enough with us here with you."

"No, it ain't hard with you here. I don't mind nothin' then, 'cause I knows you cares for me and your youngun; but it *would* be hard if you warn't here."

"But *I* is here, Kate,—now don't be so sollum, for *I* is here."

"I can't help but be sollum, Stam; last night I dreamt

about our little boy and gal that's lost and gone. They both come to see me. I was huggin' and kissin' of 'em, and presently, when I woke up, I had my arms all doubled up on my bosom, same as if I was huggin' of 'em sure enough, but they warn't there. I looked all around for 'em, but they was gone; it warn't nothin' but a dream! I feels sollum, but I can't help it, Stam."

"Kate, them younguns is gone, and it can't be holp. You'd oughtn't to study about 'em so much."

"Yes, *they's* gone," she said. "And now, if baby and you should—— Oh, Stam, won't you stay here with me to-day? We don't want nothin' that's in the wreck; I know we don't."

"I can't stay," said Stam, firmly. "No, I can't stay. It's noised abroad what I done last night, and if I should stay, I shouldn't never be worth a cent no more. Everybody on North Banks would be makin' game of me, and pintin' their fingers at me for a coward; which I ain't afeerd of Ike Drew, nor nary man that ever walked on two legs! Ike hisself would make sure I was afeerd of him if I shouldn't go, Kate; there'd be no more peace. Don't say no more about stayin', then, for I'm goin' to hang around Ike Drew to-day more than common, so as he may have a good chance at me. I wish it warn't so, but it's got to be did, Kate. You knows whether I cares for them that was stole away from us. You know, Kate, how glad I'd be to find out the devil that got 'em off, if it should be Ike Drew, or Jim Beam, or both of 'em together. Don't you know how I could take this knife and slice 'em up little by little, and not trimble when I was doin' it? Don't you know? Ha, ha, ha, ha! How I'd laugh when I was doin' it! Don't talk no more about them, Kate. Then agin, you knows if I cares for my little sick youngun, —and don't you know, Kate, if I cares for you?"

"I knows you cares for us," she said, as she leaned her forehead on her husband's shoulder and wept and sobbed, "I know you does."

"Don't cry: don't cry, Kate," said Stam, tenderly. "I'll be a coward, sure enough, if you cries. Don't cry; I shan't even to touch Ike, nor nobody else: that I won't. I ain't mad *now*; and I'd ruther be a coward than for you to take on so. I'll be one if *you* wants me to, Kate, but it'll be sure to send

me to hell, and that would be the only fittin' place for me too; I shouldn't want to go nowheres else."

"I *don't* want you to be a coward, Stam, that I don't; but oh, don't git mad; don't kill Ike, and don't make him mad to kill you!"

"Here, take this and keep it here, Kate," said Stam, as he drew the knife from its sheath, and gave it to his wife. "Maybe I won't be so apt to be a fool if I leaves it here."

"Is you ready to go, Stam?" asked Len. "I'm goin' over now."

"No," said Stam; "I'll be along soon."

Len went on, and soon disappeared around the bend of the path, and Stam stepped into the hut. "I've come back, stranger," he said, "to say a word to you: it's noised about here that a man was seed yisterday mornin' before it was light good, runnin' from that gig to the woods, with a little box in his arms; it's thought to be Ike Drew, but it's come into my mind that *you* are him; if it was you, you had best stay in here and keep close."

"It was I that had the box," the stranger said, "and it contains gold; it is buried in the sand; I can find it, and it shall be yours if you desire it."

"No," said Stam, "I don't want it. But then it's best for you to keep out of sight of some folks, or things mought go hard with you, 'specially if what I knows should get noised about. I'm goin' off now, and no tellin' when I shall come back; but Kate will do what she can to keep you hid. I should say you'd better crawl under the bunk and stay there till night comes on. You'll have to watch close, or maybe somebody'll be kivered up in the sand before to-morrow night!"

CHAPTER VII.

BOARDING THE SHIP.

THE scenes before Stam as he approached the sea on that morning were of such amazing grandeur and sublimity that even he, the rude North Banker, paused a time at the shelly brink of the reef and gazed wonderingly out upon the broad expanse. The wind that was still blowing from the northeast had lulled somewhat, but still the great ranks of billows came rolling in to land, foaming and boiling and tumbling one after another on the hard beach. The roaring and crashing and thundering were terrific. Thick clouds of spray were continually rising up from the bursting seas, and it was only at times that the coming wreck could be dimly glimpsed. But Stam paused there not long, for he had come to see the ship, and not to stand gazing in wonder upon the raging waters. Jockey Ridge was about half a mile to the northward of him, and toward it he turned his steps; for from its lofty summit he would have an open view over the spray-clouds far out in ocean.

He saw that several persons were already on the top of the ridge, and he walked briskly on in the hope that he might get there before their departure and learn their opinions as to when and where the coming ship would strand; for he had seen enough to know that her case was a hopeless one, and that her certain destruction was only a matter of a few hours' time.

As he approached the group, his eyes met first those of his mother (who, with Peggy Strubl, and Len and Sol Curt, composed the assemblage), and instantly the mad fires of passion were kindled in the hearts of the untaught mother and child; and fierce was their silent gaze at each other when he came to a halt. But brave and fierce as was the mother, she cowered at last under the dreadful frown of her son, and turned her sullen face seaward.

"You needn't look so powerful mad at her," said Peggy Strubl, "for nobody here ain't afeerd o' you, Stam Weathers! It'll be Ike Drew's time to look mad before night, maybe! You needn't turn your serpent eyes on me, neither, for I ain't skeerd,—I ain't!"

"Ain't you?" said Stam, as he advanced rapidly toward the woman and dealt a blow with his fist upon her mouth that sent her sprawling back on the sand. "S'posen you ain't skeerd,—who has I asked to be skeerd o' me? Then agin, what's it to me if Ike Drew looks mad or not? I guess I can stand it one way or other, as to that."

"That's good enough for her, Stam," said Len Curt: "she and this other ain't done nothin' since you hove in sight but to cuss you."

"You're a liar, Len Curt!" said Nancy, fiercely; "you're a liar!"

"Is I, devil?" said Len, as he rushed toward the hag with upraised fist.

"Stop, man!" Stam said, leaping between his mother and her angry assailant. "Don't hit my mammy, Len!"

"Make her keep her dirty mouth shut, then," he said, "or I'll bust her head off!"

Peggy arose: the blood was streaming from her mouth and down her chin upon her bosom. The two women, grumbling fierce curses, descended the hill together in the direction of a group of ten or more persons who were standing on the beach about a mile to the northward.

"Don't you know, Stam," said Len Curt, "that them two women's bound to kick up the devil to-day? Ike and Jim and Pete is some of them that's standin' yonder on the shore, and them women is strikin' straight to'ards 'em. They're goin' to let out what was did last night, Stam; and, when they do, Jim and Pete's goin' to lie out of it and put it all on you. They ain't after nothin' but to stir up things to get Ike down on you, Stam."

"Let 'em stir!" said Stam: "and then let Ike, or whoever wants to, take it up! I know the devil's in 'em, but I don't want to stop 'em:—let 'em go! When the devil does get into a woman, sure 'nough, it's like two devils together:—but let 'em go, and stir too:—maybe if they keeps ther eyes open they'll have a chance of seein' that I can stir, too!"

"There she is, Stam," said Len, as he turned and pointed oceanward. "She's a five-hundred-tonner, and a smart thing at that; and, more'n that, them that's got the tiller knows how to handle it. Seems as if it's a pity for sich men to git drowned. I wouldn't mind lendin' 'em a helpin' hand to save her, for I likes to see men stick to a thing like they are doin',—it's pluck. I just b'lieve if they had a half a chance they'd work that craft clear across the sea with no more canvas than what she's got on now."

"It is a pity for sich to git drowned," said Stam; "and I'd ruther help to work her off than to bring her on. S'posin' we boards her?"

"Board that ship!" said Len, gazing into his companion's face as he spoke; "go through that surf! Stam, there ain't never been nothin' put together with bolts and spikes that could live in sich a surf as that."

"It ain't been tried," said Stam; "and I'm one for tryin' it. That gig's a strong light thing, and with three more like you and me and Sol she might be shoved through,—no tellin' till it's tried. But then s'posin' she *should* git capsized or stove or smashed, we that was in her mought git ashore somehow for all that: anyway, it mought be tried. Yon's the gig where them folks is; they're keepin' her along abreast of the ship. All that would have to be did would be to launch her and shoot out,—she mought be got through."

"Make up a crew, Stam," said Sol Curt: "I'll take one oar. It's my b'lief she'll go if the right crew can be got; anyways I'll be one."

"*There's* half a crew," said Stam; "now if Ike Drew'll go and steer, and then two more——"

"Ike Drew!" said Len. "Ike Drew would give all North Banks and what's on it to wreck that ship like he wants her. He wouldn't go, Stam; 'cept it should be to pitch them that's on her into the sea, so she'd beach the sooner. He ain't afeerd, but *he* wouldn't be after *savin'* nothin'."

"It runs in my head," said Stam, "he'd go, if it warn't for nothin' but to dare the devil. Say what you're a mind to about Ike, but he knows what to do with a boat, and he ain't afeerd o' many things."

"There's Jim Beam," said Len; "and there stands Peggy and Nancy behind him, aggin him ag'inst you, Stam. I see

it in their eyes, and you're goin' to find it so. See Peggy pintin' to'ards you; and how mad Jim looks."

"What did you hit her for?" asked Jim, angrily, as Stam drew near the group of ten or twelve persons who were standing near the gig.

"For what I'll hit *you* for," Stam answered, as he quickened his pace toward the challenger; "that is, for puttin' too much mouth into others' bizness."

"The man that hits here," said Ike Drew, as he sprang between the men who were about to engage in fierce combat, "has got to hit clean through me first; and that won't be easy done, bullies, for I'm a tough one. See here, Jim, you're a fool; Stam Weathers would hammer your liver into mush in less'n no time. You'd both better save yourselves in good trim, for there'll be plenty to do bimeby when that thing gits on. I guess this is one of *your* messes," he continued, addressing the blood-begrimed woman; "but you'll have to wait a spell, for we ain't ready for it yet."

"Jim ain't no man if he takes it," said Nancy, spitefully. "Stam beat her for nothin'."

Stam scowled darkly at the speaker, but said nothing.

"He'd a done a good thing if he'd knocked her head clean off," said Ike. "But see here, bullies, I've been studyin' up better work for you than this,—who's got the spunk to undertake with me to board that ship in the gig? It's my belief she ain't comin' on till somebody goes and throws them that's got the tiller into the sea; and I'm just the one that could do that thing single-handed if I was on her deck."

"It can't be did," said Jim Beam; "the gig wouldn't live out there two minits; but even if the ship should be fotch, like as anyway there's ten o' them to one of us."

"But it *can* be did!" said Ike; "and I don't care if there's *twenty* to one,—all I'd want would be for this gig to git there."

"Do you mean it, Ike?" asked Stam. "Do you want to try it?"

"Mean it? If five more can be got I'll show you what I mean,—somebody'll see a wreck on this beach before sunset, even if I shouldn't have the luck to git back. I know one thing, I can steer this gig through, if four'll go to handle the oars and one to bail."

"I'll be one," said Stam.

"Put me down for another," said Len.

"And I'll be one," said Sol.

"Good!" exclaimed Ike. "Who else? Where's two more?"

Neither the captain nor his volunteers waited a moment for an answer to the question, but forthwith they proceeded to strip themselves to the skin, only keeping on their pants, which they banded securely around their waists. This done, they ran to the gig, two on a side, clutched the gunwales, and prepared for the launch.

"Hold!" said the excited captain; "hold, men; *four* won't do. Come, two more; quick! here comes a good sea to run out on. Quick! quick!—Ain't nobody else comin'?"

"Oh, Stam! Stam! Stam!" screamed a woman, who came rushing across the sands from the direction of the thicket, "don't try to go off in that boat!"

"Who's that?" asked Ike, as he turned his eyes toward the approaching woman.

"It's Kate," said Stam, in a disappointed tone. "She looks as if she's bringin' bad news, but I shan't turn back for all that. What's the matter now, Kate?—is the youngun bad off?"

"Oh, Stam, where has you started to go?" asked Kate, panting as if she would lose her breath. "Don't you *know* you'll be drowneded if you starts out in that surf! Don't, don't go and git drowneded!"

"Drowneded? Kate, this gig's put together solid, and she's light too; she'll ride the seas like a didapper,—we can watch and shove her through."

"Don't start out!" Kate pleaded. "She wouldn't live a minnit in that sea, Stam, and then you'd be drowneded!"

"Git out!" said Ike Drew. "What if he should git drowneded? won't you be here to bury him when he washes up?"

"Kate," said Stam, in a whisper, "talk so as no one can't hear you but me. I'll tell you what it's about. We're goin' out *to try to save that ship!*"

"To try to *save* her, Stam? Ike Drew goin' to try to save her?"

"Ike don't want to save her, but the rest of us does; and, don't you see, when we git's there we'll be too many for him,—that is, if we should git there. Len and me and Sol's after savin' of her, Kate, sh——"

"Is that it," she said,—“after savin’ of her? How can you save her, Stam?”

"It's this way. Them that's at the hellum has been havin' a hard time. They can't stand it much longer, and we could spell 'em, if nothin' else; but we can do more. What she wants is another jury-mast and more sail. They ain't got no time to put one up, even if they was strong enough,—which they ain't,—but it wouldn't take us long to have a mast up amidships and a sail bent on it, don't you see? Ten foot of canvas more would save her, Kate. If we gits that on her we can let them that's there rest and sleep while we are workin' her out in the offin'; then, after they gits a good rest, they can take hold agin' and go off with her, and we can git in the gig and try it back, don't you see, Kate?"

Kate stood in silence a time looking down, then, raising her eyes to her husband's face, she said, "It's best to go, Stam, maybe so she can be saved; but who's goin' besides you four?"

"Don't know yet. Two more's needin': one to take the other oar and one to bail. I guess it won't be long before the crew's made up. Is the stranger under the bunk yet? Jim Beam's goin' to be left behind, and you couldn't do much good for him if Jim and Pete should find him out. Tell him he'd better stow hisself close under there."

"He ain't been under the bunk yet, Stam. He give the baby some of his stuff after you come off, and it warn't no time before the little thing went to sleep, and he's been asleep ever since. He's goin' to git well, Stam, I do b'lieve it!"

"What's the man doin', Kate? I tell you he'd better——"

"He ain't there, Stam."

"Ain't there?"

"No. Soon as he got through doin' for the youngun I told him a wreck was comin' on. Then he turned as white in the face as that foam, and asked me to tell him all about her, and I done it. I told him how she looked and the fix she was in, and that she was driftin' in nearer and nearer and nearer. All the time I was tellin' him he didn't do nothin' but walk back'ards and for'ards across the floor and groan and wring his hands. Then, when I got done tellin' him, he dropped on his knees and clinched his hands and raised 'em up and

looked up a spell to'ards the roof o' the house. Then he riz in a great hurry and run out o' the door and down the path to'ards the sound. I was afeerd that maybe Ike or Jim mought see him, so I followed; but when I got to the sound shore I seed him way up to the nor'ard goin' a full lick yet. Purty soon he pitches off into the thicket. I followed on, but I ain't seed him yet. I guess he's got lost in the thicket, Stam."

"I've got a good mind," said Ike Drew, with a dreadful oath, "to take this oar and beat your brains out with it, you cowardly devils! Ain't none of you goin'? Ain't there two more that's got a man's heart? Well, stay; but don't forgit she's our ship when she comes, and the devil that puts his hand on a thing I'll cut his heart out! Now that's square! Ain't ther' *two* more?"

"I'll go," said Kate, as she sprang nimbly into the boat. "I'll go and bail, Ike."

"Kate," said Stam, in astonishment, "*you* can't go!"

"Yes, let me go, Stam," she said; "I can take the buckit and bail as good as a man. Let me go, and then *one* more'll do."

Ike looked upon the brave woman with an air of proud admiration. "Yes, let her go, Stam, let her go," he said: "she'll give us luck."

"Can you stand it out yonder, Kate?" asked Stam, pointing towards the raging sea as he spoke. "Look, can you stand it?"

"Yes, yes," she said, "I can stand it. I can bail as well as a man. I know how it is out there; but you'll see how I can stand it."

"Well," said Stam, in a hesitating manner, "if you can stand it, set down there on the after thwart and git the buckit ready; but, Kate, you'll have your hands full. Wait till I makes another hitch of the buckit-rope' round the thwart,—so; now take a turn of the rope 'round your body, for there's plenty of it; there, that's it. Set down now with your face to'ards the starn and hold the buckit so, and be al'ready to go at it when we starts."

"She's worth the whole litter o' you put together, you devil mud-suckers!" said Ike, as he put the steering-oar in place and lashed it to the ring in the stern. "Now, bullies,

put the oars in place, and see that the row-locks is all solid, and everything's right. There, is all ready?"

"All ready, sir," Stam answered.

"All ready, but one man's lackin'," said Ike, as he sprang toward Jim Beam and held aloft the glittering knife that he snatched from its sheath as he sprang; "and now git in there and take the left bow oar, or I'll chop the lights out o' you! In, you devil!—in now!"

"No, Ike," said Stam, "don't put the dog in here, or we'll all be drowned, sure. We can shove out, maybe."

"Who's that yonder, comin' in such a hurry?" asked Sol.

Instantly all eyes were turned in the direction in which Sol was pointing. A man who had emerged from the woods was approaching at full speed. It was the stranger who had slept at Stam's house on the night before.

"Who are you?" asked Ike, in great amazement, as the man, who was almost out of breath, drew near. "What sand-fiddler's hole did you pop out of?"

"For heaven's sake do something for her relief, if possible!" the stranger said. "All that is near and dear to me on earth is in that ship,—dear wife and children! Help! help! oh, save them, if possible, dear friends!"

"Do you know what you are talkin' about, crazy fool?" asked Ike. "Where did you come from?"

"Oh, try to save the precious souls!" said the frenzied man. "God will surely reward you for the brave deed! Do something! oh, if possible, do something for their relief! Say, brave men, that the ship may be boarded!"

"We're aimin' now to board her," said Stam, "and all we lacks is a man to take that oar."

"I will be that man," said the stranger, as he darted forward and seized the oar; "I will do the full part of one."

"Hands off that oar!" said Ike, in a commanding tone. "Sich as you ain't fittin' for this kind o' bizness; stand away!"

"Let me but have the opportunity of showing to you how fit I am," said the stranger, "and you shall see your mistake."

"Well," said Ike, in a milder tone, after he had scrutinized the man, "I guess we'll try you; but first thing, jerk off them purty clo's. This," he continued, as he slapped his naked

breast with one of his great horny hands, "is the kind of clo's we wears when sich bizness as this is to be done."

Instantly, and without reply, the stranger stripped off his clothes, only leaving on his pants, which he banded tightly around his waist, as he observed his companions had done theirs. "Now I am ready," he said.

"It's my belief," said Ike, "that you won't git well into the first sea before you'll wish you hadn't started. But, then, you're spunky, I'll agree, and that's more than I can say for these cowardly whelps that stands around. Be ready with your buckit, Kate; we're goin' to run out on that yonder big sea, when it busts and starts back. Set solid, for it ain't agoin' to be slow travellin' that'll take us over the first breaker; and it won't be oncommon smooth, neither. Take the aft oar, Stam; you, white-skin, take the next; Sol, your'n comes next; and Len must handle the right bow. Kate, I'm thinkin' you'd best git down on your knees right here in the bottom of the boat; you needn't mind the water, neither, for it ain't agoin' to be long before you'll have plenty of it all about you. Keep your eyes and ears open, men; look sharp, and hear me when I calls. All ready now! Here she goes!"

Then, like a shooting-star, the light gig glided down with the receding flood; Kate and the brave steersman at their posts in the boat,—she, on her knees, holding the bucket in her hands; he, standing firmly near her, grasping the steering-oar in his right hand and steadying it with his left, watching the torrent sweeping down before the bow as if in a merry race with the slender craft, glancing out at times upon the troubled scenes before him, yet ever watching the receding flood, the coming billow, and the course of his craft; the four men,—two on a side,—clutching the gunwales, running down with the boat through the yet shallow waters until is heard the steersman's sharp command, "Aboard!" when, within an instant of time, each man is upon his thwart, with oar in hand, and bending to the stroke.

The charge is a brave one, for, when the next sea comes and stands like an emerald wall lining the yellow reef, the little craft has descended the slope beyond, and is safely hid behind it; nor is she seen again until, with thundering crash, those towering ramparts fall and leave her all unmasked a hundred yards at sea.

A moment she is seen : another height is scaled, and she is lost again. Another billow crashes on the shore. Two hundred yards away, wrapped in a cloud of spray, the gig is glimpsed. She gains the summit now ; now, as a chamois struggling through the drifts on Alpine heights, she plunges through the foam, then disappears again. Another roar ; yonder away the little boat goes climbing up the steep ; her bow shoots higher than the mountain-crest up which she aims : the oars, the thwarts, the oarsmen's very feet are seen by those who stand on shore. So are they hanging at the precipice, when at the shore another green wall rears and hides them from the view. That billow leans : it falls ; the breathless watchers at the shore are looking still ; the gig has disappeared !—not lost ! Still farther out she climbs another steep !

So dares that little craft to meet the raging tempest in the teeth ; and so away, away she creeps from land,—a hope forlorn that dashes on, fearless of frowning foes, though death may be their chief.

Faithfully every oarsman was performing his duty ; constantly and rapidly the bucket was being plied by Kate ; bravely stood the dark-visaged helmsman, keenly watching every sea that approached, and so shaping the course of his light craft as that she might ascend and descend with greatest ease.

When the far-out reef was reached, the swell was found to run even higher than near the beach. Ahead the helmsman sees coming three monster seas, one after another : the greatest danger will be passed when their heights shall have been scaled, and he that stands at the helm encourages his men.

“ Hearties,” he said, “ be strong now ; the worst is ahead, yet : here comes three big brothers, rollin' and foamin' to'ards us ; be ready to shove her when I calls, and we'll go through ; then, when you sees them ugly swells rollin' along behind us, to'ards the shore, we shall be all right, for no more won't come like them. Here's the first one ! Shove her now, hearties !”

That first great monster began to curl over its frothing head before it reached the boat, but she shot through its boiling spray and descended safely into the deep valley beyond.

Kate had a hard task now, not only with her bucket, but to keep her place in the boat, for the sea came rushing and foam-

ing over the aft part of the boat,—even over the kneeling bailer's very head. But as soon as it had passed on she resumed her work with such earnestness, that before the second sea came on she had thrown out barrels of water, and again the gig was comparatively free.

"That's a brave gal!" said the steersman, encouragingly. "But stick close there, Kate, for here comes the next one. Shove her ag'in, hearties! There, she rises like a duck! Soon we'll be over it; shove her, hearties!"

But never spake Ike Drew again: the rushing billow burst with all its fury upon him, and he was swept away with the boiling torrent.

Kate, who had been grasping the thwart before her and holding to it with all her strength, now brushed the blinding waters from her face and looked up. Ike was not there! Nothing was there but the steering-oar that dangled in its ring! Instantly she sprang to it. There sat the oarsmen still upon their benches laboring: their heads were hanging low so that the briny waters might quickest stream from their faces, for no hand could be spared now to brush those waters away. The third great billow was at hand; the boat was ascending its slope; her bow ran into the thick clouds of spray that were rising from its tumbling crest. "Shove her, hearties!" cried Kate. "Shove her one time more, and we shall be free!"

Instantly, at the sound of that woman voice, all eyes were raised. Obeying the command, those strong men leaned back with all their might upon their oars, and as they did so gazed silently, more in wonder than in fear, until another flood came dashing on their heads. Ay, they gazed wonderingly: for there stood Kate at the awful post, gazing anxiously towards the watery mountain as it came rolling on, and shaping with steady hand the course of her craft through frothing foam and smothering clouds of spray.

Like a watery avalanche that billow's hoary crest came pouring down; yet firmly still the steersman held her post; her steady hands ceased not to grasp the steering-oar; her face was ever towards the driving flood. And when at last the nimble gig shot from the cloud and glided like a meteor down the slope into the green abysm, there still she stood, her dark hair streaming back, her scanty garments rustling in the

wind: there stood she still, with both hands on the oar; still gazing anxiously and steadily ahead; still guiding on her craft to meet the ever-coming seas that now, though smaller far, were towering mountains still.

"Thank God!" said Stam, as he leaned back to the stroke again. "Thank God! You're a true thing, Kate!"

The brave captain ceased not an instant her earnest gaze ahead. In her deep anxiety she seemed not to have heard her husband's thanking words. "Lively, lively, hearties!" she said; "the ship ain't far away. I sees the tired ones at the helm: they reel and stagger! Oh, no; they're only on their knees! They're on their feet ag'in. There! one turns loose a hand and beckons us to come. Lively, lively, hearties! lively! we'll save her yet!"

"We can't help you, Kate," gasped Stam. "If one o' these oars is dropped, we're gone; we can't help you now. Can you hold her to it, gal?"

"Strong and lively, hearties!" said Kate. "A little longer,—so; we'll fetch her in another run; and here we go down the swell! Once more,—so! we'll save the ship!"

It was not long before the brave little captain and her crew were on the ship's deck, and the gig was swinging high to the davits.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MUTINY OF PEDRO AND HIS BAND.

ABOUT the middle of the eighteenth century Paul de l'Auzanne, a native of Southern France, took shipping at a French port and proceeded to Louisiana,—which at that time, and for a long time afterwards, was a French possession,—intending to make that part of the New World his home. Paul, though a poor young man, was strong and active, and, better than all, of a glad, hopeful disposition.

Not many years had elapsed after his landing at New Orleans before he had, by his industry and frugality, accumulated enough to purchase a large tract of low land not many miles from the city. The lands were of that class usually called

"bottom-lands," which, though heavily wooded and remarkably rich, were in that day generally considered next to worthless.

Not only was Paul a man of excellent judgment and shrewd business tact, but he was also, to a very great extent, his own adviser; and it was seldom that he made mention of his business affairs or of his plans to any except a very few of his most intimate friends. But these all advised against his purchase of those wild, wet lands. Yet for all that the purchase was made, and the very last dollar of the little sum accumulated paid out. By the purchase he became a large land-holder. His territory extended for miles along the Mississippi, and had an average width of from five to six miles; yet there was not a single square foot of the whole of it but that was subject to annual overflow. At certain seasons of the year, it is true, the whole of these lands were high and dry, and then they presented the appearance of being susceptible of cultivation, but the same lands that at one season of the year were elevated at least ten feet above the river level, would at other seasons be submerged to the depth of ten feet or more. One thing in Paul's favor was, that the lands were paid for, and another, that the yearly taxes charged upon them were so small that he had no difficulty in promptly paying them. So, still he labored on, always cheerful, always hopeful.

As the city extended and became of more and more importance, and when emigrants began to pour in in great numbers and settle not only in the city, but in the country around, much began to be said about diking the lowlands, so as to protect them from overflow. A few wealthy individuals tried the experiment on a small scale, and it proved abundantly successful and satisfactory. Bottoms were reclaimed and made into splendid farms, and then the city bade fair to be at no distant day one of the richest and most populous in America. Prices for bottom-lands advanced higher and higher, until Paul made sale of his to a company of capitalists, at a clear profit in ready cash of two hundred thousand dollars. Then it was that his friends admitted that he had acted more wisely in making the purchase than they would have done, and that his judgment was as reliable as theirs at least.

Paul de l'Auzanne was not one to become insane or be made a fool of by any such good stroke of fortune. He had planned for all this in his own quiet way, and when the good

fortune came,—though so suddenly,—he was by no means surprised, for the result was as he had expected it would be sooner or later.

The money that he got for the sale of his lands he forthwith invested in real estate in the city, and the lots that he purchased here and there in different localities he set out to beautify and improve. The result was, that the actual profits from these investments were greater than those from the river lands. And so, within the period of twenty-five years from the day that he had first set foot upon American soil, he was one of the wealthiest men in the city of New Orleans.

Paul had been living at his new home but a few years before he married a girl who, though as poor as himself, had a genial, kindly disposition, much resembling his own.

The fruits of this marriage were eight children, all of whom died in infancy except Pierre, the first-born, and Adele, the youngest, a bright little girl, who had not passed half through the third year of her life at the occurring of the circumstances presently to be related.

Both the man and his wife, happy and glad as their life was, had a longing desire to see again with their own eyes the hills and dells, the fields and vineyards, and the bright rivers of La Belle France. Once again they desired to visit the scenes of their early childhood, however brief that visit might be. Then they could return, with hearts knit closer to the beautiful land of their adoption beyond the wide waters, and be happy and content during the remainder of their lives; they could then bid farewell forever to the dear old motherland, and feel henceforth that the place they had voluntarily chosen to dwell at would be sweet home for them.

Many a time had Pierre sat upon his father's knee and heard him relate stories about France, and describe the scenes and tell of the incidents of his early life. The bright pictures that the father at such times spread out before the son were ever fresh, ever living ones to that father; they faded not, nor ever became dim or indistinct. Ah, how bright, how enduring are memory's tintings! The outlines in the distance may be dim, but how soft are the lights, how delicately are traced the shadows within them! And every light, every shadow, and every hue and tint is a faithful representation of that which was real,—aye, of that which is real.

Paul's pictures were of happy spring-time,—spring-time that was endless, deathless, unchilled by frosts, unmarred by tempests: spring-time when sky and river were blue and placid, and when hill and vale and mead were covered with green and flowers. Scenes of peace they were, of endless beauty, upon which was never swept the besom of relentless winter.

Pierre delighted to listen to his father; and as he advanced in years, he too began to love the dear France that he had never seen, and to feel that he too must in time be a pilgrim to its beautiful shores.

At last the time came when Paul de l'Auzanne began in earnest to make preparations to visit France. Pierre, who was then fifteen years of age, was at school. Adele, as has been said, was an infant, not yet three years old.

Paul's plan was to leave Pierre behind at school, and to make arrangements while in France for his education there; and then, upon his return to America, to send him over, to remain until his education should be completed, or at least for a number of years.

Jules d'Arcourt, a man of about the same age as Paul, who was born and grew to manhood in the same village with him, and who came with him in the same ship to America, had from early childhood been Paul's bosom friend and companion. This friendship being mutual, the two young men were more like brothers than mere friends. The plans and designs of one were as well known to the other as to himself, and wherever one went the other was apt to be seen.

The general plans of the course to be pursued by them when they should arrive in America were arranged months before their departure from France; and after their arrival, their friendship grew into a deeper and more sincere affection, if possible, than had existed before. And though Paul married and became rich, there was never any change in their friendship and affection for each other. Jules did not marry, for he felt that he could better advance the interest of his friend and his family by continuing single.

Jules d'Arcourt, too, was a man of sound judgment; and he too was to some extent successful in business and in the accumulation of property. But he desired the success of his friend above all things, and his only object in increasing his

own wealth was that Paul and his family might be benefited thereby.

So passed along years with the two friends; never lagged or lessened their sincere love and affection for each other. And now that Paul had come to the determination to visit France, Jules, as a matter of course, made his preparations to go also; and when the day for the ship's departure arrived, he was promptly at hand and embarked with the rest.

Not many days passed before the broad Atlantic was reached, but never was the noble ship to reach the shores of La Belle France. Weeks, months, years came and passed; yet no tidings came of ship or crew or passengers,—all were lost. Year followed year, and still no tidings. Paul and his wife and child, and Jules, and the officers and crew, and the ship and her cargo,—all were lost!

Pierre grew to manhood and became a successful merchant. The large estates that he had inherited grew continually larger, and yet the city of New Orleans had not a kinder, more charitable, open-hearted, generous citizen than Pierre de l'Auzanne. He was a feeling friend to the afflicted and destitute; his hand was always open and ready to administer to their needs, and his great heart had always sympathy for their distresses. The sick and sorrowing, the widow and orphan, the oppressed and down-trodden, could better have spared any man in the city than Pierre de l'Auzanne.

Pierre married when quite a young man, and in time he was blessed with four children,—two girls and two boys. Lucie, the eldest of these, was a bright girl of thirteen at the time that her father, following the example of *his* father, made preparations to visit France. Paul was about to enter his eleventh year, Murat was seven, and little Adele was not quite eighteen months old.

Never lived there on earth happier husband and father, and never had happy husband and father happier and more affectionate and loving wife and children.

Marie, the wife of Pierre, was one of those noble Christian women whose chief delight is to render glad and happy all those with whom she may come in contact. A halo of lovely light was always about her sweet face. Her home was ever cheerful and peaceful, for she was to her husband the sincerely-devoted wife; to her children, the gentle, loving mother; to

her friends, the frank and generous woman ; and to her servants and dependants, the kind, indulgent mistress. And in return, all loved her with a pure and tender love.

Pierre had never ceased to sorrow at the sad fate of his affectionate parents and little baby-sister. For years he lost not hope that they would yet return. It might be that they had been picked up at sea and taken by the rescuers to some very distant land ; in which case they would not be able to return for a long time. He had read of such things, and why might it not be the case in this instance ? But, when years had passed without any tidings, he could not reasonably hope longer,—yet never could he cease to mourn their loss.

Well he remembered the stories about France that his father had so often related to him ; and the older he grew, the greater became his desire to visit the scenes of the dear parents' childhood. Marie, too, had hope that at some time she should see France ; for she, too, had heard much said about the dear land of her fathers, and it was with feelings of great gladness that she heard her husband's announcement that they would take ship at an early day for Europe, to be absent in all probability a year, or even longer.

Twenty-five years had elapsed since the departure of his father and mother, when Pierre and his family took shipping for France. The day of his departure was one long to be remembered by many of the dwellers in the good city of New Orleans. A great concourse of people stood on the wharves to witness the sailing of the ship ; and as she was loosed from her moorings, those that she was about to bear away were greeted with many a " God bless you !" and many a sob was heard and many a sad tear fell as that multitude turned away homeward.

The ship had been three weeks on her way, and was far at sea, when she was overtaken by a furious gale from the south-east, which continued to blow from that point for three days. She was driven hundreds of miles out of her course towards the American coast. For much of the time during that three days she was either lying-to or scudding under bare poles. Many of the spars had been badly shattered by the storm, and it was determined by the officers to steer for Chesapeake Bay, not only for harbor, but to have the ship repaired and put in a condition to proceed safely on her way. But here arose

confusion,—where was Chesapeake Bay? The best they could do was to guess of their whereabouts, for the storm had been upon them so long, tossing and driving them about here and there beneath the cloud-draped sky, that an error in calculation of even hundreds of miles would be a very probable thing.

After running for twenty-four hours in the direction, as they supposed, of Cape Henry, the storm increased to such fury that the foremast and mizzen-mast were carried away; and this rendered it necessary to cut away the main-mast. Then one of the ship's yards was set up for a jury-mast, a small sail was bent on, and she went laboring heavily on.

For a whole day and night following these sad accidents both officers and crew kept in good heart and continued faithfully at their posts, for all were satisfied that the coast was not far distant now; and even if they should fail to strike Cape Henry by ever so much, with the wind as it stood, they could run on up the coast and find a harbor somewhere. Pierre remained on deck most of the time, doing duty as a seaman before-the-mast, and always ready and anxious to obey orders in doing whatever work might be assigned to him that was in his power to do. This ready action on his part seemed for a time to give new hope and strength to all; for all knew, at least by reputation, who the new hand was.

Marie continued calm and quiet during the whole time, and many a time when she could catch the opportunity she would whisper words of comfort in her husband's ears: "Strive on and hope on, Pierre, and cease not to trust to the mercies of God. He has sent the storm. He can bring the calm."

When the darkness of night came on, on that day that the ship's masts were carried away, they laid her to, and waited and watched until the coming again of daylight. But still no land appeared. Night came again, and again came day, yet no land. It then began to be observed that some of the crew were becoming insolent and not disposed readily to obey orders. Pedro, the third mate, a gigantic, grim-faced Portuguese, was first to set an open example of insubordination by positively declining to obey the order of a superior, and then defying him with oaths and angry words. After this it was observed that he was continually holding sly conversations in an undertone with individuals of the crew, who, in a little time, if

they obeyed orders at all, did so sullenly, and only through fear that the plot which was being laid might prove to be unsuccessful, and not as a matter of duty.

Though Pierre knew well what was going on, he never once whispered the matter to his unsuspecting and trusting wife, for he thought it would be time enough to inform her of the dreadful secret when things should come to their worst.

As the officers were kind to the men, he could imagine no motive for the mutiny except to plunder the ship, and then to make their escape to the shore; and, believing that his suspicions in this regard were correct, he determined to attempt to make all right by offering large rewards to the crew for faithful service. Forthwith Pedro was sought, and it was proposed that he should have one thousand dollars, and each one of the men five hundred dollars, if they would return to duty and lend a good hand to take the ship into port.

"Where is the money?" Pedro insolently asked, after hearing the proposition.

"I have it not with me," Pierre answered, "but I will arrange for you to get it immediately upon our arrival in France, or, if you prefer, when the ship shall return to New Orleans."

"How much have you along with you?" the ringleader asked.

"Only about two thousand dollars; which is in Spanish gold, and which I am willing now to place into your hands as an earnest," Pierre answered.

"Get it!" said Pedro, in a commanding tone, "then we may talk more about what you propose."

Pierre brought from the cabin a small chest; but by the time he had returned to the deck with it, every one of the disaffected had gathered about Pedro, and were anxiously inquiring what it was that he and Pierre had been talking about.

"Here in this chest," said Pierre, "are the two thousand dollars; the balance I will make good, as I told you."

"And is this all you have?" Pedro asked.

"Every cent; but the balance shall be paid in the same coin."

"Take this box to the fore-castle," said the leader, addressing one of his men in an imperious manner. "Now," he

continued, as he turned again to Pierre, "so far as your proposal is concerned, we may have more time hereafter to talk about that."

The officers of the ship, who had been silently watching the whole transaction and listening to what was said, were well-nigh dismayed at the result. Sixteen of the crew of twenty-two had joined with Pedro, and the captain, two mates, Pierre, and six of the crew were confronted by the powerful desperado and his sixteen supple followers.

The mutineers, after Pierre's money had been taken, marched forward, and were for some time engaged in consultation. Angry words and terrible oaths were freely used among them; but at last they seemed to agree, and, forming in a double line, they marched back aft, with Pedro at their head.

"We have had some trouble at agreeing on all points, captain," said the ringleader, in a tone of insolent familiarity. "I and four more were for cutting the throats of every one of you, and so bringing the whole matter to an end at once; but the others say that we shall take what we want from the ship, including all the small boats, then put off to land and wait for the wreck to come on. Now, while I still think that mine is the better plan (for it will amount to the same thing in the end, as the wind is hauling northeast, and will no doubt keep there long enough to land the ship), yet, for the sake of peace, I have agreed to the compromise, or rather, I have agreed to concede my point and go with the majority. And now, sir, we have come to learn what the rest of you think about the matter, and what course you intend to take."

"You know very well," said the captain, coolly, "that we can offer no resistance, and that we are completely in your power."

"What arms are on board?" asked Pedro.

"Here are all the keys," the captain said; "and as the steward is one of your party, he can inform you better than I can. Look for yourselves."

"Are there money and jewels and other light valuables?"

"You have the keys; search for yourselves."

"Steward," said Pedro, "get the arms together first; send them forward as you find them, then get together the money

and valuables; take them also forward. You six men, swing that boat to the davits; put that little chest of gold in it, and what you want to eat and wear, then be off to land and wait there until the rest of us come. The wind is getting to blow true for the shore; it is near by, and you may reach it before night. The rest of us will leave this evening or to-morrow morning early. We will fetch along what may be worth taking. Bear a little to the leeward as you go, for you must calculate for the ship's drifting, and we must get all together at the land. Mind, you have no share in the balance if you are not close by when we come. Don't keep off too much, for this ship won't move ten miles to s'uth'ard in ten hours as long as the wind stands where it is, and it will be apt to stand there from two to three days."

"Ay, ay, sir!" said the captain of the six men. And in a few minutes the boat and her crew were ready to be let down into the sea.

Pedro sent his gang forward upon some duty before the departing of the boat, while he alone remained. Pierre had hope still that the discontented might be brought to terms; and with a view of making another and more favorable proposition, he went and stood near Pedro, and was about to speak, when the ringleader turned savagely toward him: "What is it now?" he asked.

"I have come," said Pierre, "in the hope that we may yet come to terms and settle this difficulty."

"I will hear nothing more!" said the man, angrily. "It is on your and your family's account that my plans have failed. You shall not remain on the ship another hour! Climb up into this boat, for you shall leave with the six men!"

Pierre was astounded; such a thing had not been dreamed of by him. "You are a *man*," he said. "It may be that you have a wife and children! Surely you will not separate me from mine at this trying time!"

"Get in!" was Pedro's only reply, as he snatched his knife from its sheath, and scowled fiercely at the miserable man.

Well did Pierre know the utter folly of resistance. "I will obey your order," he said; "but will you not first permit me to take leave of my family?"

"Get in," said Pedro, "or in less than ten minutes I will feed both you and your family to the sharks!"

Pierre got into the boat that was swinging over the decks, and Pedro went forward to direct his men.

The miserable man was sitting with his face toward the ship's bow. He had not heard the step of one who was approaching from the cabin. Marie was at his side: her loving arms embraced him. She had heard and seen all, and now her sad face was as pale as the mountain snow.

"Adieu, precious Marie!" said Pierre; "we shall meet again. Adieu!"

"Yes," she said, firmly, "we shall meet again, my husband! we shall meet again! Trust in God, Pierre!" She kissed his cold forehead and returned to the cabin.

The mutineers approached. Pierre saw that they were now all heavily armed. He uttered not a word: he wept not. All was now with the merciful Father. The six men got into the boat, and she was lowered into the sea. Instantly she shot from the ship's side and passed away and away landward,—sinking and rising with the swells, until she was lost altogether from view.

It was Pierre de l'Auzanne that had sought shelter from the tempest in Stam Weathers's rude hut.

CHAPTER IX.

ASLEEP IN THE THICKET.

WHEN the boat that contained Pierre shot off from the ship's side and took her course landward, Marie was in the cabin, kneeling beside the berth in which Murat and little Adele were sweetly sleeping. Lucie and Paul were in the adjoining berth, and they, too, were asleep. The terrible excitement and alarm that they had been in for several days and nights past had deprived them of rest; and now they bade fair to sleep during the remainder of the day, and possibly also through the coming night.

The kneeling mother was looking out through one of the little square windows in the ship's stern as the small boat swept on by. Still upon her knees she remained, and watched

the boat passing ever farther and farther away from her,—now ascending to the billows' summit and now descending from view, and again appearing and disappearing, until it dwindled in the distance to a speck that soon melted in the dark horizon.

She made no exclamation; nay, she was as silent as one dead as she kneeled there with clasped hands and gazed out. Not a tear welled up to dim her eyes during the time; but oh, the agony at heart of that loving wife! In her deep affliction she was only consoled by her undoubting trust in the mercies of God. And well she knew that her husband, in the same confidence, would battle nobly against the trials and adversities that were now so sorely besetting him.

Rising from her knees after a time, she again made her way to the cabin-door and looked out. There, nobly at their posts, stood the captain, the two mates, and the six faithful men. The mutineers were still in the forward part of the ship; they had found a cask of liquor, and several of them were drinking and carousing,—seemingly utterly indifferent to the fate of either themselves or others. The leader and several of his gang were parading the decks with arms in their hands, and taking pleasure in offering insult to those who were silently performing their duty. When night came on, those who had been drinking were in a state of beastly inebriation, rolling about on the decks with every plunge of the ship.

At the early dawn of the morning that followed the day of the outbreak the mutineers had another consultation, when it was agreed by them to leave the ship as soon as the boats could be got ready.

Two small boats remained. A question arose as to whether it were better to divide their numbers and take both boats, or to destroy one of them and the whole band take the other. The latter course was determined upon at last; one of the boats was launched over into the sea, and the other was swung to the davits and made ready to be lowered. Several packages of valuable articles, a quantity of provisions, a cask of spirits, all the arms that could be found, and some other things were placed in the boat; and now the mutineers were ready to leave. A short conference took place, during which disputings louder and fiercer than before were heard.

"I have given in once," Pedro was heard to say, with an awful oath, "but I don't intend to do it every time. I say they *shall* go! Don't you think that those we leave on deck would cut the ropes and tumble us into the sea if *they* were not in the boat with us? *I say again, they shall go!*" Immediately after saying this he went to the cabin-door, and, looking in, ordered Marie to take her children and prepare to leave in the boat with them.

Up to this time Marie had borne her afflictions bravely: but now, at the sight of the grim face that was scowling upon her, and at hearing the brutal command, her heart failed her, and, snatching her babe from its bed and clasping it to her bosom, she sank swooning.

It was long before she returned to consciousness and found that she was in the boat and holding her infant still clasped upon her bosom. Lucie and Paul were on each side of her: they were crying and sobbing; and little Murat, with his arms around her neck, was sadly weeping,—tears were streaming from his eyes and bathing the pale and silent face of the mother: the little mourner doubted not but that she was dead.

"Where are we, dear children?" asked the mother, in a feeble voice, as she opened her eyes.

"Dear, dear mamma," said Paul, "are you alive? Oh, I am so glad! so glad! so glad!"

Lucie did nothing but press the sweet, sad face to her bosom, and sob more bitterly than before.

Murat ceased crying the instant his mother spoke, and sat looking wonderingly through his tears into her face. "You are not dead, are you, dear mamma?" he asked. "You couldn't talk if you were, could you?"

"No, not dead, precious children," she said: "and I pray that Our Father will still spare me to be with you." Then she glanced around upon the watery wastes as the boat was passing over the top of a lofty wave, and yonder, miles away, was the ship rolling and plunging in the sea. She was heading in the opposite direction, for now her safety depended upon keeping away from the land that for several days past she had been aiming to reach. And here were the mother and her children, in the power and at the mercy of a gang of eleven bad, fierce men, climbing from billow to billow in the little boat, and aiming they knew not whither.

The day passed : dark, dreary night came on,—dark, dreary night, and nothing heard during its long hours but the wild tumult of wind and wave, and the constant rumble of oars in the rowlocks as stroke after stroke was regularly made. Another day came and passed ; another dreary night came on ; still, on they went through the ever-increasing tempest. But it was not long after the dawn of that second day before the dim outline of land was seen ahead ; and soon the bald hills and green thickets of North Banks arose up plainly in the view. It was but a few hours after the first discovery of land before the little boat, guided by Pedro's masterly hand, reached the high rolling surf near the shore, and went gliding and plunging through its foam and deluging spray, and sweeping with the speed of a rocket high up on the yellow sands.

Greatly was the poor, weary mother relieved when she was told that she could step forth with her children upon the land. She knew not where she was. The land before her was a desolation. She knew not the intentions of those dreadful men ; but yet a ray of hope, faint though it was, came gleaming into her bosom : those might be found, even here in the barren desert, to sympathize with her ; aye, more : Pierre himself might be near his loving and loved ones.

"Sit here," said Pedro, harshly, to her, "until we take the freight over yonder into the woods. We are going to make a tent there with this canvas, and when it is ready I shall come for you. You shall keep company to-night with a set of the jolliest fellows that you ever saw. Ain't that so, François?"

"True, every word of it," the man answered, laughing boisterously ; "but I should say, captain, that she and her tribe had better sit here until all these things are taken over and put under shelter ; for this mist and drizzle is doing no good to our provisions, and arms, and ammunition. Business, you know, always before *plcasure* ; no telling how long we shall have to stay here waiting for the ship, and I should say it would be a lame thing to depend on a place like this for supplies."

"You are right," said Pedro. "Come, then, boys, stir yourselves : let us get the things over yonder and raise the tent ; the next thing then will be to knock the head out of this brandy cask. No doubt this kind lady will wait here until we get a drink or two around ; or, if she likes, we

will call her to join us when we get the tent up and the things stowed."

"No, no, captain," said François; "let her stay here until we get a drink or two around, for brandy has a better taste when the women are out of sight, you know."

Roars of laughter followed this, and the men went at their work with a will.

Marie, with her children, sat down as she had been ordered. She spoke not, but only sat there vacantly looking on as the men carried package after package away, until nothing of the freight was left, and she was there alone with her little ones.

"Where are we going now, mamma?" asked little Murat; "are those bad men going to kill us? Oh, where is papa? where, where is dear papa? Are they coming back to kill us, mamma?"

"If they kill us, dear little boy, God will take us to heaven, and we shall be happy there."

"Mamma," said Paul, "they are all gone now; can't we run across yonder and hide in the woods?"

"Oh, see, mamma!" said Lucie; "what does that mean?"

Marie looked in the direction that Lucie was pointing, and there, standing on the ridge behind which the mutineers had carried their things, was a man, who was waving his hand in an excited manner, as if to attract their attention. As soon as he saw that Marie had observed him, he pointed to the southward with one hand and beckoned them away in that direction with the other.

"Oh, come, dear mamma," said Paul; "let us run away as that man is telling us to do!"

Thoughts passed rapidly through the mother's mind. What could this mean? Certainly no good was intended; and yet, might it not be that they would be able to get into the woods and escape? Possibly people lived in there; they might yet be saved!

"Take Paul's hand, Lucie," said the mother, "and fly! wait not an instant: I will follow with the little ones. Fly, precious children, fly!"

"No, no, no, mamma!" said Lucie and Paul, together; "we cannot leave you! Let us each take a hand of Murat, and then you will have only Adele. Come; come, dear mamma, and let us go from this dreadful place!"

Cold and stiff and drenched as they were, they hurried rapidly away. The frightened mother turned back her eyes at almost every step, expecting continually to see the men pouring on in pursuit.

When the man on the hill saw that they had understood him and gone, he descended into the valley beyond and disappeared.

Nerved by constant fear, Marie and her children went rapidly on, she ever encouraging them not to tire, and Lucie and Paul urging on the little brother, and sometimes even dragging him along,—for his poor little feet were now taxed beyond their endurance.

“Lucie, child,” said Marie, “do you think you can carry the babe a little way, while I take the weary little boy in my arms?”

“Yes, yes, mamma,” said Lucie; “I was never so strong; I can take her and go as fast as the rest without tiring.”

Then the mother placed the babe in Lucie’s arms, and took up Murat into her own, and so for some time they struggled on.

“You cannot carry her farther,” said Marie to the well-nigh exhausted girl; “give her to me; I will try to take them both.”

She was not long in learning that the burden was too great for her, yet she went tottering on as if she would fall at every step. So struggled on the mother and her little ones for two or three miles. There were yet no signs of human habitation to be seen; the scenes on every hand were desolate and unfriendly. Twilight came creeping on; its shadows fell gloaming over the barren coast. The thick canopy of cloud that had been dreary enough even at noonday was now becoming black and dismal, and naught was before the weary fugitives but fearful uncertainty and unrest. Oh, if it were not for the hope of again seeing Pierre,—if the innocents in her charge were but in a place of safety, and with kind friends,—how gladly could the sorrowing mother have laid herself down on those cold sands to die! But God’s will was otherwise, and she would bear up yet longer.

“Come near me, dear children,” said the mother to Lucie and Paul; “hold each other by the hand and keep very close to me, for it will soon be so dark that we shall not be able even to see one another. Let us cross over the sand here into

the woods, for our pursuers will not be apt to find us there, at any rate, during the darkness of the night."

"Don't cry so, dear buddy," said Lucie to Paul, who was sobbing bitterly. "God won't let anything hurt us: maybe we shall find papa in the woods, too. Don't cry, dear buddy."

"No, my precious little boy," said Marie; "for if you make a noise those bad men may hear it. I fear they may follow us even to-night."

"Oh, mamma," said the boy, "I can't help it when I see you suffering so! I wish I could help you, but I can't!"

"But do not forget, my brave boy, how important it is to be quiet now. I will try to bear up until we get into the woods, and then we can all rest."

How that mother reeled and tottered as she made her slow way across the soft sands of the reef with her heavy burden! How she struggled and gasped for breath before the dark wood was reached! But at last it was reached; her weary limbs could bear no more, and she sank to the ground, holding still her two little ones, who were now fast asleep in her arms. Lucie and Paul nestled close to her, and in a few minutes they were all sleeping soundly. And so profound were the slumbers of those loving ones that not even the mother was aroused by the piteous screams of her babe when it awoke.

The child screamed aloud for some time, and then dropped to sleep again. The mother, who had not once stirred, though the piteous cries were ringing in her ears, awoke soon after those cries had ceased at the sound of a mere whisper,—
"Here they are!"

Marie started to her feet with a loud scream.

"Lady," said a kindly voice, "friends are near you."

"In heaven's name," she asked, "who are you?"

"I am François, lady; one of the ten who came with Pedro. For heaven's sake be quiet and hear what I have to say. Jeannot, another of Pedro's band, stands at my side, and is only concealed from your view by the deep darkness; no others are near. For hours we two have been seeking you,—not to harm you, but to render you service; and had it not been for the screaming of your child, I am sure we would not have found you. I speak the truth, lady: we are here to protect you and your children from harm."

Lucie and Paul and little Murat, who had been clinging in

agonized fear and in silence to their mother, and listening to the man's words, breathed more freely now. But the poor mother was still apprehensive of the worst. "Oh, kind ones," she said, in an agonized tone, "will you not be merciful to the weak and sorrowing? Will you not take our lives? We fear not *death*. God will bless you for the deed, brave men!"

"You trust us not, lady," said François; "but before the great God in heaven I swear that we have come to protect you and your little ones, and not to harm you. I know it is hard for you to believe that two of the followers of that desperate man would follow you to serve you, and to save you, if possible; but I have spoken truly; and again I swear, before the great Being whom I, too, serve, that our purpose is good. My body shall be a wall to stand between you and your children on one hand, and violence and dishonor on the other. You cannot understand this now,—I know you cannot; but trust me, lady, you will understand it if life is spared to us yet a little longer."

"Oh, kind ones," said the poor, sad mother, "have you indeed come to help and befriend us? Has God indeed sent us succor?"

"Be quiet! be quiet!" said François, in a low voice. "Lady, your case is still a terrible one, even with the succor at hand; the worst calamity of all is impending, and God only knows what the end will be. We cannot promise safety to you, but only our assistance. Speak, Jeannot, for yourself."

"Lady," said Jeannot, "I swear before high heaven to be the friend and protector of yourself and your helpless innocents, and I am prepared to die for you and them, if necessary. God knows that, though we have followed Pedro, we have had no part in his brutal plots and designs,—we followed him only that we might serve you. In the eyes of the world we are mutineers,—cowardly deserters from the post of honor,—wretched criminals; but God knows better than men, and in his sight we have stepped from one post of honor to occupy another more honorable; for know, lady (it is a terrible word to say), there is greater probability that the ship will yet be saved than that you will escape from the utter ruin that is impending!"

"What can be done?" gasped the frightened woman. "You are men; we are weak and utterly defenceless; oh, save us,

then! save us, save us, if possible! Remember that I am a wife and mother, and that these innocent ones are friendless and helpless. Remember——”

“Hish! For God’s sake be quiet!” said François. “Those are now near at hand who have been seeking you for hours! They seem to be coming directly towards us. Do you not hear them? That loud laugh is Pedro’s! Quick, quick, and let us go! Quiet, children! Speak not now, but keep near! And, lady, see to it that your babe frets not!—They have passed on! How near they came!”

“What can be done?” asked Marie, when the band had gone on by.

“Let us remain quietly here until they get farther away,” said François, “then we must push farther back into this woods with all haste. But forget not the necessity of being quiet and cautious, for even the cracking of a stick might betray us. Some of those men are crafty and watchful, and they are most of all to be dreaded, for they will lose no opportunity to accomplish the work that they have deliberately planned, and that work is your ruin. There are two of these men worse than all the rest, and Jeannot and I have had it difficult to keep these in place; nor could we have succeeded except by constantly watching them, and by practising deception, and by calling in the brutality of Pedro to our aid. To-day, after we had lugged the things over from the boat to the woods, the cask of brandy was opened and drinking commenced. Jeannot and I pretended to drink and to be as merry as the rest, though we tasted not a drop. I was not long in making the discovery that these two crafty men were practising the same deception as ourselves. They carried this on until they supposed that all the rest were too drunk to interfere, and then under one pretence or another they made several attempts to sneak away. But though I pretended to be as drunk as the rest, my eyes were continually upon them, and every attempt they made to escape was thwarted. But finding my task to be a difficult one, I at last called the matter to Pedro’s attention, and so worked up his revengeful spirit by leading him to believe that the two had laid their plans to murder us, and were only waiting for us to get into a condition not to be able to resist them, that forthwith he ordered them to be securely bound. I then told the chief that I had been

watching them, and that they had not tasted a drop of the spirits, but had only been pretending to do so; the truth of which I took it upon myself in a sly way to induce them to confess, representing that Pedro would surely murder them unless they did so, and unless I should use my influence to obtain a pardon for them. After they had confessed, liquor was brought, and they were compelled to drink a double portion; the consequence was that in a short time they were in a more helpless condition than any of the rest. It was I that you saw standing on the hill beckoning you away, and after you had gone, Jeannot and I stole chances to go to the same place and watch until you had passed from view. Night had come on before the men began to arouse from their stupor. Then they remembered you, and with whoop and yell they started across to the boat, each trying to outdo the rest in the race. Jeannot and I came this way, and after searching in every direction for two hours, heard the screaming of your babe, and so discovered your whereabouts."

"Oh, what is to be done now?" said Marie. "Where can we go to escape them?"

"We must hurry away," said François. "Listen!—the faint sounds of Pedro's yell. They seem to be circling back in this direction. Come! for Christ's sake loiter not! Let me take your little boy, and Jeannot the babe: the larger children can take our hands. Sh! Be quiet and have courage now, lady. Take the girl's hand: she has mine; we will lead you on. Ah, we are now in a path and can go faster. Keep the bearing of those yells, Jeannot."

Not a word was spoken as they hurried rapidly up the path. They had not gone far before François came to a sudden halt. "Hish!" he said, in a low voice. "Let us crouch here together at the side of the path: I hear the sounds of voices near by."

"I hear them," Jeannot whispered. "I can discern on the dark sky the outlines of the roof of a little house: it is near the path, and we have passed it by without seeing it."

"Yes, it is a house," said François, "and several persons seem to be near it. Do you not hear their voices?"

"Oh," said Marie, "we may find rest and shelter here for the weary little ones!"

"Let us remain here quietly," said François: "we may learn whether it would be prudent to halt and ask shelter."

The voices were of both men and women. There were at least four or five of the persons. They seemed to be about the door, and though they spoke in a loud voice, those who were at only a few yards' distance could scarcely understand what they said.

"There! they're comin' this way," said a female voice. "I wonder what the meanin' of it is!"

"I know," said another: "it's a gang of drunken devils that's got ashore from that wreck,—that's just what it is. Don't you hear 'em, Jim?—they're comin' true this way. You and Pete had better git your guns ready, for may be so they mought be needed. Them devils is drunk enough, and there seems to be a passel of 'em, too."

"It's the ship's crew," a man answered, "and what's the need of guns sich a time as this? I can see through it all: Ike has beached her after all,—that's it. Ike knowed what he was doin' when he raised that other jury-mast. You see, when he got to the ship he found more of 'em than what he had counted on, so he takes another course: he raises that jury-mast and rigs it, to make 'em b'lieve he's all right; then he takes the hellum, and lets them that's been hard at it so long go to sleep; but when they got good to sleep—don't you see?—he chugged as many overboard as he wanted to, and kept the rest to do the wreckin' to-morrow. That's like I'd a done it; and that's just the way it ought to be did, too! Ike knowed what he was doin' when he was runnin' that ship out,—it was the best way to blind them that had been havin' her in the world. Well, you see he's got 'em on shore, and they've all got drunk,—him into the bargain,—and that's what's the matter now. Seems to me they've crossed the path and is makin' on by to'ards the s'uthard. Listen: I'm goin' to call. Ike!"

Jim Beam was standing out in the gloom and darkness before the door of his hut when he called. The sound of his deep, powerful voice reached even farther away through the roaring storm than Pedro's mad yells had done. No answer came; but instantly the yell and whoop and boisterous laugh that had been heard away in the thicket were hushed.

"They're listenin'," said Jim, "to know which way the call come from. I'll make 'em hear me good now. Ike!"

That call was followed by a sudden and unusually severe gust of the storm that came howling through the thicket. It

was one of those fierce flaws that sometimes sweep, screaming down from the black skies, through the already-raging tempest, and then wing away with the speed of a thunderbolt. Such a gust followed that second call,—such a scream,—a scream that, as it came, was continually on the ascending scale of the gamut; and then, as it swept along by and away, descended lower and lower and lower, until it was lost in the tumult of other sounds.

“Did you hear that, Peggy Strubl?” asked a woman. “Christ! how solemn the wind howls to-night!”

“If I hadn’t a seen ’em get on board the ship with my own eyes,” Peggy Strubl answered, “I should a knowed for sartin that Ike Drew had got drowned in the surf to-day, and that that howl was his spirit answerin’ Jim’s call from hell.”

“Hush now!” said Jim; “I’m goin’ to call agin. Ike!”

Loud peals of devilish laughter answered this call. Pedro and his gang had heard the calls before, and had advanced silently to within a few rods of the hut when Jim called the third time.

So startled were those who had been standing at the door at hearing the demoniac peals, that they darted into the hut and secured the door as well as they could; but the fastening was not sufficient to keep out those who were determined to enter. With yell and whoop the drunken gang rushed pell-mell forward: the slender door was shivered into fragments, and they entered.

In the confusion that followed the women succeeded in getting out, and Jim and Pete alone were left to fight out the battle as best they could.

During all this time Marie and her children had continued crouching at the side of the path, where they had barely escaped being trampled underfoot by Pedro and his men when they rushed forward to the wild assault.

“Let us make the best of this confusion and leave,” said François, “for not a moment is to be lost.” Then they arose and hurried on up the path, and in a little time emerged from the thicket at the sound shore.

Greatly were they surprised at seeing the broad waters before them; for they supposed that they were going farther and farther back into a dense forest. For a time they knew not where to turn.

"Now I remember," said François: "we are on the North Carolina coast, and this water before us is one of the great inland seas of that State. Let us search along the shore for a boat, Jeannot. If we can find one, there will be hope!"

The two men left Marie and her children standing there and went, one up and the other down the shore, in search of a boat. But Jeannot had not got a dozen rods away before he turned and came running back. "Come, quick," he said; "I have found one already!"

The boat was anchored in the shallow water a few rods from the shore. In it were found the unshipped mast, with mainsail and jib furled upon it, sprit, rudder, tiller, oars, and bags of sand for ballast; and nothing was to be done but to ship the mast and rudder, spread the sails, draw the anchor, and away.

In a few minutes more the wind-puffed sails were driving the little craft rapidly away through the deep darkness towards a land unknown to any of the fugitives.

"Hark!" said Jeannot, when they had got out a little from shore. "What cursing and yelling! And see that light! Have they not fired the hut?"

Marie and her frightened children looked back towards the shore that they had just left. The light increased rapidly, and soon flames were seen bursting up above the stunted tree-tops, lighting the shores and glimmering upon the gloomy waters. The boat had got too far away for them to hear the sound of voices; but a number of human forms were plainly seen in the glare emerging at different points from the thicket and speeding away up the shore; and foremost of all were two women. But these were not seen long, for, turning their eyes back and seeing that they were followed, they darted aside into the thicket and were seen no more.

Gradually the flame decreased in brilliancy, and at last it sunk down from view below the trees; and again the shores were dark and dreary.

"Poor creatures!" sighed Marie.

CHAPTER X.

GILSEY ROE.

GILSEY was sitting on the chest, with her head leaning back against the door-post, during the whole time that Kate was telling the stranger about the wreck in the offing, and describing its appearance to him.

Poor Gilsey Roe! She was a forlorn, forsaken-looking thing that morning. Her long towy locks were in even a greater state of disorder than usual. Only two of the four great brass buttons on the back of her frock body (the top and bottom ones) were buttoned, so that, whenever she moved about, much of her naked back was exposed to view. And as she sat there now, with her yellow legs bare to the knees, her mouth wide enough open to receive a pullet's egg, and staring out of her expressionless eyes into the stranger's face, she looked indeed as if she were what her granny often in her milder moods told her she was,—nobody's gal.

But Gilsey was an orphan, the child of a daughter of Nancy who had been dead a long time, the child of a man who was drowned while wrecking, when she was an infant of tender years: she was, therefore, only one in a long list of nobody's gals. Poor Gilsey Roe! She had a kind heart though, and she loved that little weazen-faced baby as well as she knew how to love.

She, too, had heard every word that Kate had been saying about the wreck, but for the life of her she could not tell why it was that the man should carry on as he was doing. For her part she was glad that the wreck was coming on; not that *she* expected to get anything from it to the value of one cent, even though it might be loaded with Spanish doubloons, but somehow it was always such a quiet, peaceful time for her when a wreck came on. At such times she felt that it was as well to be nobody's gal as somebody's; for at such times granny was sure to be gone from the time of the first heaving in sight of the ship until the last thing was brought away from

the beach. Stam, too, would be gone most of the time; and it was not an unusual thing that even Kate would leave the house in early morning, and not return once until night. They would always leave for her plenty of cold fish and potatoes, and all she had to do was to go to the pan and eat whenever she desired. How could any one be otherwise than happy in such a case?

For a full half-hour she sat there on the chest, without once changing her position in the least, and without once during that whole time either closing her mouth or winking her eyes. But when the man arose and began wringing his hands, and pacing hurriedly back and forth across the room, she became uneasy, closed her mouth, and sat straight up, for she felt sure that he was becoming desperately angry, and there was little doubt upon her mind but that he would soon set in to beating Kate and herself; and what should they do then, without any one to take their part? She arose at one time and went as far as the door in flight; but, glancing back and seeing that the man had got down on his knees, and was looking up towards the roof of the house, she returned and quietly seated herself again, and resumed her vacant stare at him; but again, when he arose and rushed out of the door and away, she would have flown out before him, but his movements were so rapid and unexpected that she had not the time to recover from her surprise and get fairly on her feet before he was out and gone.

It was natural enough, Gilsey thought, for Kate to run to the door, and look out to see which way the man had gone; but when *she* ran out and up the path after him, she was so amazed that she could not utter a word until she saw the flying woman turn the bend in the path a hundred yards away; then she asked the question that had for some time been on her lips: "What's *you* goin' for?" And this question was asked in exactly the tone that she would asked it if Kate had been only two yards distant.

She continued to stand there in the door, and gaze up the path for full ten minutes after Kate had disappeared from view, waiting, not so much for her return, as for an answer to the question. But as neither Kate nor an answer came, she went and sat on the side of the bunk, and looked down into the little pale face there for at least ten minutes longer.

Then it seemed that Kate came again into her mind, and she hurried to the door, and looked up the path again. She was not coming yet; maybe she had followed the man way up the shore, then through the thicket and across to the sea, where the wreck might be seen. "Oh, Kate had gone to keep Jim or Ike from hurting the stranger!" Gilsey turned, and seated herself on the chest, and leaned back, resting her head against the door-post, and began staring into the great deep vacuum before her.

"Shouldn't wonder," she thought, "if some o' his folks ain't on that ship, and he's afeerd they'll be drowned; that's it now! Hope nobody won't hurt him; but he'd better not go about Ike or Jim much! I wants him to come back. That stuff of his'n is better'n root-tea a sight; it does the youngun a passel o' good; just see how good he sleeps! He's got so he laffs every now and then, too. Ain't he purty when he laffs? He'll git well now, I guess. Won't it be nice when baby gits big enough to help me to dig sand-fiddlers out o' their holes? Hope Jim and Ike won't pester that man; don't see what they should want to do it for; maybe it's to git money. Wonder what folks should want with money?—to string 'round their necks I guess. This piece of mine is gittin' right smart and black; 'bout time I'm thinkin' to throw it away and git another piece. Baby's piece is purtier'n mine now; but mine used to be like his'n is now. *It's* gittin' sorter black, too, I b'lieve; 't will do so after a spell; maybe sweat blacks it. Hope Kate'll get two pretty pieces at the wreck,—one for me and one for the youngun. Wrecks is mighty nice, ain't they? My! that fire 'll go clean out if I don't put some more sticks on."

The girl went out and got an armful of sticks, which she laid on the fire; then she stretched herself on the floor near the hearth and went to sleep.

There she slept for full two hours, and the longer she lay there the more in the form of a semicircle she made herself, by raising her knees and lowering her head, until at last head and knees had got almost together.

Seldom before had she had such an opportunity for a nice long nap in the daytime; so seldom, that it required five minutes for her to persuade herself upon waking that she had not just aroused from her usual night's sleep, and that it was

not now early morning. It was a rare circumstance that granny permitted a whole hour of daylight to pass without scolding or cursing or beating her; and now she looked fearfully around for the venomous hag, but she was not to be seen,—all was quiet. The sticks in the fireplace had burned to coals, so she went out and brought another turn of them, and put them on; then she sat down again to think about the happy time she was having. Her seat was upon one of the low stools; and though, in fact, her eyes were fixed steadily upon the burning sticks, yet from their expression one might have thought that the object gazed at was at least forty yards beyond the fire.

“Wrecks is nice things, sure 'nough,” she thought: “nobody don’t stay home, and me and the youngun does have sich a good time. Nobody ain’t allers hollerin’ at you, and cussin’ you, and hittin’ you on the head and about; you don’t have nothin’ to do sich times but to bring in an armful o’ sticks now and then, and take a tater or fish out o’ the pan when you gits a hungry, and tote the youngun about when he gits to cryin’, and then give him a little fish and tater, and git him to sleep, and lay him down in the bunk. Wish there was a wreck to come on every day or two, for when they comes granny allers goes and stays ever so long. Wonder where they gits so many things to put in wrecks?—somewheres, I guess.”

And so the child’s thoughts were running continually from one subject to another; until her head sank forward, lower and lower, and finally rested on her knees. She was fast asleep again.

So passed the whole day with her,—thinking, talking, eating, sleeping, feeding the baby and getting it to sleep, bringing in sticks for the fire. What a peaceful day it was for poor Gilsey Roe! Few like it had she ever experienced before, and that few on occasions of the coming on of wrecks. Ah, angel Peace always came to Gilsey Roe in the wake of the tempest.

When night began to deepen, Gilsey pushed to the door of the hut and went and laid herself in the bunk beside the child, and soon she fell into a deep sleep, from which she waked not once until the broad daylight came again and glimmered down through the cracks in the roof upon her face.

She arose hastily, and went and threw the door wide open,

wondering that no one had yet returned. Never before had Kate remained so long away from her baby, and Gilsey began to have serious misgivings that all was not right. Her first impulse was to run down the path toward the sea-beach and ascend to the top of one of the hills, from whence she could see far away up and down the shore. Possibly enough might be seen to quiet her fears, and then she could return and have another peaceful time. But she had no sooner stepped out of the door than the baby awoke with a scream, and she ran back and took it up in her arms. A woman stepped in at the door as Gilsey lifted the child from the bunk. "Well, this will do," she said. "I 'spected no better than to find you all dead,—*that* I didn't! Ain't no one been here to pester you?"

Gilsey started and turned toward the speaker, but said nothing.

"Warn't nobody here last night?" the woman asked.

"No," Gilsey answered; "there ain't been nobody here as I knows on since Stam and Kate went off; but where is *they*?"

"Where is *they*,—eh? Dead and drowned for what I knows, and it's a wonder if they ain't. Yisterday, after everybody had got tired clean out of waitin' for the ship to beach, a passel of them that was standin' lookin' out at her got into a notion to launch the little gig that come ashore at Kill-Devils night afore last, and chance it in her to go out and fetch in the ship theirselves."

"Who," interrupted Gilsey,—"*granny*?"

"Wait, and I'll tell you all about it. Le's see; there was Stam and Len and Sol and Kate——"

"Kate? Is Kate drowned too?"

"And Ike, and another that nobody knowed who he was or where he come from. Ike said he popped up out of a sand-fiddler's hole, he, he, he, he! Well, they got into the gig and went out; then bimeby the little boat got to the ship; then bimeby another sail was histed, and the ship, 'stid o' comin' on, played right off, and by night she was ten mile out. And that's the last that has been seed of any o' them that went 'cept it's Ike; he's got back,—he's over there on the beach now, layin' out on the sand restin' hisself."

"*Is* he?" asked Gilsey.

"Yes, he is. I've seed him with my own eyes, Gilsey. Ike Drew's as dead as a herrin'."

Gilsey was too amazed to speak. She only stood with her mouth open, staring into the woman's face.

"For what I knows," continued the woman, "they're *all* dead and drowned. Like as anyway they started back to shore last night and swamped; but then nobody ain't drifted up but Ike, and the gig ain't nowheres to be seen neither. I can't see how it is, for my part; but then, like as anyway they're all dead and drowned."

Gilsey looked at the baby and shuddered. "Where's granny?" she asked.

The question was answered by a woman who was standing at the end of the door-block, in such a position that only her head could be seen as she peered in. "She ain't fur off," said Peggy Strubl. "But who's in here, Betsy?"

"Nobody but me and Gilsey and the youngun," the startled woman answered, as soon as she recovered sufficiently from her surprise to speak. "But what's got you to creepin' about this fashion?"

"Creepin' about, eh?" answered Peggy, as she stooped down and peered under the bunk. "I should say it was a time to creep about. Is you all that's in here, Betsy Curt?"

"What's the matter?" asked Betsy, in great surprise.

"Matter, eh? Well, all the devils is loose on North Banks, that's all. They come last night and sot fire to the house and burnt it up; then Jim shot at 'em with a powder gun, like a fool; then me and Nancy runned off into the thickit; then Pete got away; then they kotch Jim and mammoaked him into mush; then they went and got the boat and has done somethin' with her; and—that's the last that has been seed of 'em. I guess ther' ain't nothin' there under the bunk, is there?"

"Was granny burnt up?" asked Gilsey.

"Granny burnt up? Didn't I tell you she and me runned off?"

"Has the devils kotch her yet?" asked the girl.

"You'll see soon enough if she's kotch or not."

"Where's Jim and Pete now?" asked Betsy.

"Jim's layin' in the path where they left him, and Pete's setting down in the sand close by looking at him, and list'nin' to him howl and cuss. Ain't them that went off in the gig come back?"

"One of 'em has," answered Betsy; "I seed one of 'em a spell ago."

"One!" said Peggy. "How did——"

"Which one?" asked Nancy Weathers, stepping into the door. "How did one git ashore by hisself?"

"What did he have to talk about?" asked Peggy.

"Nothin'. He wouldn't say nary word."

"Nothin'? Where was he when you seed him?"

"Layin' on the sand restin' hisself."

"Betsy," said Nancy, fiercely, "you're lyin'!"

"Is I? Well, you'll see if you'll just go over to the beach, for he's there yet," said Betsy, almost choking in the attempt to restrain her laughter. "I tell you Ike Drew has come to land, for I've seed him myself. Let me tell you,—he's dead and drowned!"

"Ike Drew drowned!" exclaimed Peggy. "I'd ruther it was so than for the wreck to come on."

Nancy said not a word, but instantly she turned and was hurrying rapidly away.

"Come back here, you witch!" said Peggy; "I know where you're off to! But listen to me: if that box ain't found when I looks for it, somebody'll git hurt. Hear that, don't you?"

Gilsey, who some time before had laid the baby in the bunk and gone out of the door unnoticed by the others, came running in now in great excitement, exclaiming, "They're comin'!"

"Who's comin'?" asked Betsy Curt.

"Stam and Kate and the rest,—they're all comin'!"

"How do you know that?" asked Betsy.

"I've been up on the hill,—a little boat's makin' in to'ards the beach."

At this announcement the three women hurried out and off toward the beach, and Gilsey snatched the baby from the bunk and followed them with all haste.

"That's her!" said Betsy, when she reached the top of the hill,— "that's the same boat they went off in. That's them!"

Nor was she mistaken, for in less than half an hour from that time the little gig came plunging and darting through the breakers, and Stam and his wife, and Len and his son, and the stranger stepped out on the shore.

CHAPTER XI.

THE FUGITIVES REACH A STRANGE LAND.

THE boat containing the fugitives had got well away from shore when the flames from the burning hut descended beneath the tree-tops. Here, out in the broad scope, the little craft trembled and quaked within the grapple of the angry tempest. The skies seemed even more dismal than before the burning, and ceaseless was the wailing dirge of the taut sheets.

François and Jeannot sat at the helm; Marie and her little ones were crouching low in the bow. The sand-bags were piled well to the windward. The craft went streaming on, ploughing, rearing, plunging, now careening on her beam's ends, and now, like a stormy petrel, leaping from wave to wave and brushing the summits with her wings,—reeling, screaming, darting on before the rushing wind to deeper, darker seas.

It was a fearful adventure, the launching out of that little deckless boat at such a time upon the turbulent waters; but better that than to remain,—aye, better that, though other shores should never be reached.

Hours passed. The winds began to lull as morning light came glimmering through the gloom. Those at the helm discovered then that they had passed from the sound, and were sailing up a broad, straight river, the shores of which were covered with dense forests.

“It is fortunate,” said François, “that we have chanced to come into this place. No doubt we shall be safe here,—at least for a time,—for no signs of human habitation are to be seen in any direction; and, besides that, I am sure we have a fair start of any who might be disposed to pursue us. In my judgment we can do nothing better now than to look about for the wildest and most secluded spot of all this wild region, at which to establish headquarters until we can determine upon some plan for future action; but, Jeannot, we cannot be too cautious, for dangers are on every hand, and we must remember that our object is not merely to make our escape,

but, if possible, to restore the father to his sorrowing loved ones."

For an hour or more past the wind had been lulling away more and more, and now the storm was spent, and the little boat was resting on the dead-calm river, ten miles up from its mouth. Her sails hung drooping down; they were barely moved by the gentle roll of the sleek waters. Scenes of beauty were now on every hand: away astern the far-reaching sound was in view; ahead, the broad, straight sheet of glimmering water was bounded by sky horizon; and on both sides, as far as eye could see, were deep, silent wildernesses. The dreary cloud-curtain that had been so long hanging between heaven and earth was rolling up higher and higher from eastern horizon, and letting in floods of heaven's light upon the world beneath it. The great frowning mass overhead was breaking into fragments that seemed as islands and broad continents, with silver shores, and purple plains, and deeper-purpled vales, and hills of amber hue, and burnished mountain-tops, and steeping peaks of flame,—all floating on through the blue seas of heaven.

There by the tiller sat François and his companion still, and nestling in the bow the weary mother and her little flock were sweetly sleeping. The mother's head was resting on the gunwale; a tress had fallen and was trailing on the water; upon her bosom two little heads were pillowed, and near her heart as they could get two other heads were lying cheek to cheek. The morning sunlight came and bathed in rosy light that loving group. Then the mother's eyes opened. She started when they fell upon those two who sat so quietly at the helm, for in a twinkling memory came, spreading dark pictures of the recent past before her; and bitterly she wept. Though she had passed through scenes of horror, though anguish and agony had been feeding on her heart so long, not once had she wept until now; not once until the storm had passed and sunlight morn had come, bringing its peace and beauty. She sobbed and moaned as sobs and moans the child that is brought to look for the last time on the pale, cold face of its confined mother. And now those men, who had dared to battle with the shrieking storm without a thrill of fear, bowed low their heads to hide the tear-dimmed eyes; nor spake they while that mother sadly wept.

"Lady," said François, at last, "we know how sad the afflictions that weigh upon you; but take heart: the God that drapes the sky with tempest clouds sends light and beauty also upon the earth. Take heart and hope, for all may yet be well. You wonder at these words from men who followed Pedro; but before high heaven I speak the truth and say we are your friends, and that we will shield both you and your little ones from harm and insult with our lives. We have not come here, lady, only ourselves to escape the wrath of cruel men, but to serve you and yours that are weak, to seek for him that is lost. Fear not, then; trust us: we are men, not brutes, followers though we may have been of Pedro."

"Oh, kind friends!" said Marie, "if word and act had failed, the tears upon your cheeks assure me of your good intentions. I forget that you were followers of that cruel man, and trustingly place myself, and these who are as defenceless as I am, under your care. God grant that our efforts to find the dear lost one may be successful! Henceforth, I will strive not to murmur or despair. Take whatever course your better judgment may direct, and I will follow willingly, trusting in the mercies of an all-seeing and pitying God,—trusting that all will yet be well."

"I think, François," said Jeannot, "that it will not be prudent for us to remain here longer. This boat with its white sail is a conspicuous object, and possibly we may be observed, even in so wild a place as this is. Let us furl the sail and unship the mast, then put out the oars and seek some hiding-place at the shore. Here, to our left, is the mouth of a creek,—suppose we run into it? No doubt diligent search is now being made for the boat we have, and it would be as sad a calamity to fall into the hands of those wild people who dwell upon the coast as it would be to be overtaken by Pedro."

François admitted the wisdom of the suggestion: the mast was unshipped, and in a few minutes the boat was gliding up the narrow creek, farther and farther back into the shadowy wilderness.

The creek, though very deep, was in some places so narrow that the ends of the oars touched its opposite shores at the same stroke. On it reached, bending this way and that in its snake-like course for a distance of four or five miles, when it widened abruptly out into a broad lake.

Here the oarsmen rested a time from their labors and looked wonderingly out upon the scenes of indescribable beauty before them. The children, who had wakened at the creaking of the oars some time before, forgot for the time their sorrows, and they too looked out, silently wondering. Even little Adele, who had been fretting, reached out her hands over the sleek waters, laughing as she did so.

The oval shores of the lake were covered with a dense growth of juniper, whose deep green extended from the very ground up to the height of sixty or seventy feet, with here and there in the midst a rugged old giant, whose velvety cone towered high above the general level. Here and there were trees that the storms of years before had bowed down towards the surface of the water; but these, though bowed, were still as fresh and green as any: it seemed as if they were but stooping forward to smile upon the beautiful images beneath them.

"How beautiful!" Lucie exclaimed. "Oh, if dear papa were here with us, how glad I would be to remain a time! and how I would love to sail about on this lovely lake in early morning and at the sunsetting! Is it not beautiful, mamma?"

"Dear child," said Marie, embracing her daughter, "the scenes are indeed glorious, but observe what a dark solitude surrounds us. Quite likely no human being dwells within many miles of this spot, and it may be that the eyes of so many rational creatures as now behold the scenes before us never before beheld them."

"Beautiful! beautiful!" exclaimed the enraptured girl.

"No doubt," said Jeannot, "numbers of savage beasts roam in these wilds."

"What is that yonder, swimming across the lake?" asked Paul, excitedly.

"I think it is a bear," François answered.

"A bear?" Lucie asked, in a tremulous voice.

"He has landed," said Jeannot; "see what a cloud of spray as he shakes himself! Now he has disappeared."

"He did not even look in this direction," François said. "He has no apprehension of danger or of being disturbed in his wild retreat."

"Look over here in the water, mamma," said little Murat. "There is another boat, with a little boy in it; he has a cap like

mine. See how he is looking up and laughing at me! Take him in here, or he will be drowned there under the water!"

"It is but a picture of yourself, little Murat," said Lucie; "for see, yonder are pictures of the trees and vines and flowers that hang over the water. Take off your cap and hold it out, and you will see a picture of that, too. Do you see my two hands down there?"

"No," the little boy answered; "they are not *your* hands, Lucie; nor is that *my* cap, either." And though he laughed heartily, he would not be convinced that what he saw were only images.

François arose and stepped forward, lugging a well-filled sack, which he placed near Marie. "In this, lady," he said, "are provisions,—some ship-biscuit and smoked meat and other things. Jeannot, you see, has a sack near him, filled in the same manner. It is what remains of the provisions brought by the order of Pedro from the ship. Last night, when the drunken sailors went yelling from the tent towards the beach, Jeannot and I, by a preconcerted plan, each seized one of these sacks and strapped it upon our backs and brought it away. The contents are clean and in as good condition as when taken from the ship. I know what I say, for I was the ship's steward, as you know; and these, with two other sacks like them (the contents of which were consumed and wasted together), I put up with my own hands. Eat and give to your little ones, for I know that both you and they are in great need of something to nourish you."

Soon after François had opened the sack's mouth and exposed to view the tempting contents, and before he had got through with one-third of his explanation, Paul, who was very hungry, took out both bread and meat by the handful, and distributed the same plentifully to his sister and little brother, not forgetting to put one of the large round biscuits into little Adele's reaching hand, nor to pile at his mother's side enough for two hungry men; then, without ceremony, he helped himself.

Marie returned grateful thanks to the kind-hearted men, for really both her children and herself were in great need of food, as they had had nothing since the morning before. "You see," she said, "whether what you have so generously set before us is acceptable; but *you* are not eating, and I am sure you, too, are in need of food."

"Yes," François said, "we are in need of food, but not a crumb of the contents of these sacks will be eaten by us; they are for you and your children. Have no fears for us, for we are used to roughing. Something will turn up in good time for us."

When Paul's hunger was satisfied he took from the bottom of the boat a piece of an old iron kettle, that had been used as a bailer, and dipping it into the lake, brought it up half full of water, which he was about to drink, when Lucie cried out, "Don't drink that, Paul, for it is very salt. I drank some by accident when on the ship, and was made sick by it."

"But this water is not like that," said François; "this is *fresh*, and no doubt very good to drink."

"But see how red it is!" said Paul.

"It gets its color from the roots of the juniper," said François; "it is both pleasant to the taste and healthy."

Paul drank some of it, and pronounced it the best water that he had ever drank; and one after another the others drank, and all pronounced it excellent.

Again the men put out their oars, and rowed in the direction of the head of the lake; for they deemed it prudent now to get as far away from the haunts of men as possible. But before they had got half-way across they discovered a creeklet, similar to the one through which they had come, opening into the lake on their left. They also saw, over the juniper growth, back in the woods, the tops of a grove of lofty trees, which they supposed was the growth upon higher lands than those near the margin of the water; so they concluded to turn aside and explore the creeklet, in the hope that they might find not only a secure hiding-place, but dryer land upon which they might take up their abode for a time.

They had not gone up the winding creeklet exceeding half a mile before they came to a dry, sandy ridge covered with lofty pines.

"I am sure," said Jeannot, "that we could not find a better place than this to rest at in this whole wilderness."

"Or one more quiet and peaceful," said Lucie. "What a lovely green arch the junipers make, lapping over the creek!"

"Let us stop here by all means," said Paul. "I think

we may succeed in capturing a bear or deer here, or in doing some other fine thing that we may tell papa about when we shall find him."

Both the men laughed at hearing the little boy's earnest remarks.

"I think, Master Paul," said François, "that there are plenty of good fish in these waters; and I shall be disappointed if we do not succeed in capturing some of *them* very soon."

"But how are fish to be caught without hook or net?" asked Paul.

"I might ask, how are bear and deer to be captured without dog or gun?" said François, smiling. "But you will see, I think, that we will capture the fish,—and that, too, without hook or net."

"How *then* are they to be cooked without fire?" asked Lucie.

"And, even if fire were to be had, without pots or kettles or pans to put them in?" said Paul.

"We do not know what we can do until we try," said François; "but we must work now, and talk more about these things at another time. The *first* thing to be done is to build a house. There is an old, rusty, and battered axe under the head of the boat, and a brickbat near by it; bring them out with you, Jeannot. We will cut the timber with that axe to build our house with."

Paul laughed heartily at seeing the old battered axe brought forth. "I think it would require a full year to chop down one tree with that axe," he said.

"We shall see," said François, as he sat down on the ground and began whetting the axe with the brickbat.

François kept steadily at his work, and in the course of three hours he succeeded in getting the axe sharp enough to chop soft wood with. "Three hours more of steady work," he said, "will get it all right; but further whetting must be postponed until another day, or we shall not be able to complete our house before night."

"Before night!" Paul exclaimed, in surprise. "But how are you to build a house, if the axe were ever so sharp? Where are you to get bricks for the chimney, tiles for the roof, and glass for the windows? Where are great piles of lumber to

come from? Where are nails? Where are carpenters and brick-masons?——”

“Necessity is the mother of invention,” said François; “and very many of our wants are imaginary. Now, you have asked to see the material for building, the utensils to work with, and the skilled workmen: they are all before your eyes. The building material is growing in great abundance on every hand, and it only needs to be cut and prepared. Jeannot and I have each a knife; the two knives and this axe are the tools that will be used, and we will be the workmen. But be patient and observe. We shall have a house completed before night, unless some accident occurs to prevent.”

The two men then went earnestly at work chopping down some little, slim trees; these they trimmed, and cut into such lengths as they desired. Then several other pieces were cut, at the upper ends of which were left prongs; these pieces they called *forks*, and these poles and forks were the lumber to be used in building the house. They were carried and piled at the proper place; then the forks were sharpened, and stuck in the ground at proper distances apart, and the poles laid from prong to prong upon them.

“There,” said François, “the frame is completed, and only needs to be covered. Bring up the roofing and weatherboarding, Jeannot, while I clear away this undergrowth from the grounds.”

Paul was about to laugh heartily at the men’s pleasantry; but observing the serious and business-like expression of their faces, and seeing also that Jeannot went immediately off, while François hurriedly cleared the grounds of the bushes and roots, instead of laughing out, his face gradually settled down into an expression of serious thoughtfulness. Then, placing his hands behind his back, he did nothing but stand silently watching François, and looking out for Jeannot to return.

Jeannot soon came back, lugging the sails of the boat which he had taken from the mast; these he and François stretched over the poles and forks, securing the edges to the ground with little pegs that they drove through the reefing-eyelets.

“There,” said François, “is the house complete; it only needs now to be furnished: bring in the carpets, Jeannot, and put them down, while I am getting other things ready.

We must be in a hurry, for it will be high noon in an hour from this time, and we have much to do yet."

Jeannot then busied himself gathering up armfuls of the clean pine-tags that covered the ground under the great pines to the depth of several inches; these he took into the tent and spread smoothly and deep over the ground.

"Now, Master Paul," said Jeannot, in a serious tone, "if these should get to fraying or ravelling, it will be but little trouble to repair the damage, for there is an abundance of the material; and it is not costly either, soft and nice as are the carpets."

"Make way there!" said François, who came blundering in, bringing a great stack of gray moss upon his head and shoulders; "let me get these beds off my head, so that I may have the use of my eyes. I have been guessing my way, and blundering against the trees all along."

Paul looked on in astonishment, as François made two great piles of the dry moss and flattened them down in the shape of beds. "Where did you get those beds?" he asked.

"I found them hanging from the limbs of some huge cypress-trees that grow at the margin of this ridge that we have settled upon."

"Did you get all that you saw?" asked Paul.

"No, indeed," said François; "there are thousands of the trees, and each tree has a score of beds hanging from its branches."

"Where shall I place these divans?" asked Jeannot, as he came lugging in a couple of short logs.

"I think," said François, "they will look more ornamental placed on each side of the room, directly opposite to one another,—but, Jeannot, one of them is badly scratched. I think you had better get it exchanged."

"No trouble about that," said Jeannot, "for there are thousands where these came from. I will exchange it for a better one."

"Wait," said François, "let us put off until to-morrow the selection of the more elegant furniture; for really we have a great deal of necessary work that must be done in a short time. You must remember that there is yet a kitchen to be built before dinner can be cooked, and then you and I must erect a dwelling for ourselves before the coming on of night."

"I am at your service and ready to follow your direction," said Jeannot. "Where shall we pitch *our* tent, François?"

"As good a place as we can find is under yonder great pine, twenty rods or so to the northward. But the kitchen is the next thing in order; you may take its erection in hand, while I get together some chairs, a dining-table, and some table-ware. The kitchen first, Jeannot, and then you will have to look around for something to cook."

Jeannot took the axe and began the digging of a hole about two feet square, nearly in front of the tent, and not more than two rods from it.

"What are you digging that hole for?" asked Paul.

"Hole!" said Jeannot; "that is the kitchen, Master Paul. See, it is completed now, except the rigging of a crane in the chimney to swing the pots and kettles upon."

He then drove down two forks on opposite sides of the hole and placed a little pole upon them. "So much for the crane in the chimney," he said. "Now, I will go and bring cooking utensils from the boat." Saying this he started hastily off towards the boat, and soon returned, bringing the broken kettle and some rusty wire that he found under the stern-seat. The wire he bent and twisted in such a manner that the kettle could be suspended by it from the pole that reached from fork to fork over the hole. "There," he said, addressing Paul, "all that remains now is to find something to be cooked, and then to kindle a fire and cook it."

"Very well done," said François, as he came out of the tent and approached the kitchen. "Now, Jeannot, for dinner. You are a successful fisherman,—I need say nothing more. Come into the tent, Master Paul, and see whether the table suits you."

Paul went and lifted the curtain at the doorway and entered the tent. There was the dining-table ready to receive dinner. François had driven four forks in the ground and placed poles on them; on these were laid several of the thwarts that he had brought in from the boat. On two sides of the table he had driven pairs of sticks in the form of the letter X, and on these were laid poles flattened on the top. These François called dining-room chairs.

The little boy was both delighted and surprised. "I never saw nicer table and chairs in my life," he said; "but then——"

"But then, where is the dinner to come from? Well, Master Paul, if we fail to get a nice steaming dinner to set upon that table *to-day*, we must look out for one to-morrow; and if we fail then, we may succeed the day after. We have this satisfaction, if we get the dinner we shall have a table all ready to put it on."

"Come here, Master Paul," called Jeannot. "I shall want you to help me to catch some fish for our dinner, and I am about to be off now."

When Paul went out of the tent he found Jeannot busily engaged preparing fishing-tackle. He had gone into the swamp near by, and cut a stout reed and trimmed it smoothly. At the small end he had fastened a strong cord about four feet long. Two pieces of hard, tough wood, an inch and a half or two inches long, he had whittled to keen points; these pieces he crossed one on the other and tied securely together. Then he wrapped the cross with a strip of red flannel until the points of the sticks were concealed in the ball, and left the two ends of the strip hanging three or four inches from the ball. This ball was then tied to the cord that was fastened to the end of the rod.

"All is ready now," said Jeannot. "Come, let us go to the creek."

"Do you expect to catch fish with *that*?" asked Paul. "No cork, no sinker, no *hook*!"

"We will see," said Jeannot. "Stand there on the stern-seat and look as much as you please, but keep very quiet."

Jeannot then took his stand at the bow of the boat, and as he pulled her slowly and noiselessly along by the overhanging boughs that came within his reach, he at the same time drew the red bait rapidly about on the surface of the water, through the little coves under the limbs, and back and forth across the creeklet. While he was thus engaged, Paul stood on the stern-seat, looking earnestly over the bow at the bait as it was drawn skimming over the surface of the still, dark waters.

They had not been going on in this way long before the bait suddenly disappeared; the end of the limber reed was drawn down to the water, and Jeannot was leaning back steadily against the weight. The reed was arched like a bow; the outer end went circling about this way and that, close to the

surface; now it was lifted two or three feet, now, by a powerful surge, it was drawn down even into the water; then slowly it was raised again, and again it went circling about this way and that; gradually it came higher and higher, until at last great whirls and eddies ridged the sleek waters, the pliant rod still arching as a bow, and the strong cord whizzing along at the head of the watery ridge.

All the while Jeannot stood with his right foot planted firmly before the left, with his right hand before the left on the rod; the right steadily raising the weight, steadily giving way, yet ever steadily raising, while the left seemed merely acting the part of a balance-weight. All the while the excited fisherman's sparkling eyes were following closely the turnings this way and that of the end of the rod; following the tight cord as it inclined from perpendicular, and whizzed to or from him, to the right or to the left; following the whirls in the water as they circled to the right hand or to the left. Ah, for the time that fisherman had but one object before him in life,—to bring the unwilling monster to flounder at his feet in the boat!

Paul, forgetting to be quiet, had hastened forward, and was standing on the centre-board-well behind Jeannot, leaning forward, and looking over his right arm, reaching out his hands as if he expected that the fish would be near enough soon to be taken by the tail.

At last the noble fellow—a great pickerel, two feet long—succumbed. It seemed that he had reached the point of absolute despair, for he was lifted from the water towards the boat as limber as a rag; only once—as he was coming over the gunwale—he made the merest flirt with his tail, as if by way of a last feeble protest, when, lo! he dropped back into the creek!

How blank was the fisherman's face! How disappointed was Paul! How rejoiced was the pickerel! Paul went and looked over the gunwale where the fish fell, in the hope that he was waiting there to be taken by the tail, but he was nowhere to be seen. "Oh, oh!" the boy exclaimed, as his arms dropped limberly at his sides, "we have lost him!"

"Never mind," said Jeannot, by way of comforting the boy; "there are plenty of fish in this creek as nice and as large as that stubborn fellow. They say that 'a bad beginning is fol-

lowed by a 'good ending.' If that be true, we shall have fresh fish for dinner after all."

Again the boat moved slowly and noiselessly along, and before it had turned the bend in the creek that looks out into the lake, five great pickerel were dancing and fluttering in it. The oar was then put out, the boat was sculled back to the landing, and forthwith preparations for dinner began.

Jeannot, who, since his return, had been kneeling by a log near the kitchen, scaling his fish, happened to glance up into the little boy's face, and observing the solemn expression upon it said: "Why are you so serious, Master Paul?"

"I have been wondering," said Paul, "whether you intend to eat those fish *raw*. I know they would be excellent cooked, and as hungry as I am now, I am sure I could eat half of one of them if they were nicely cooked; but ugh! raw fish!"

Jeannot paused long enough from his work to reach up an arm to his face and wipe away the tears that had come there from laughing at the boy's serious manner of treating the subject. "We are all apt to have our whims of one kind or another, Master Paul," he said; "but after all I think it would depend on *how* hungry one might be, whether he would eat raw fish or not. Probably if you were starving you would take this fellow that I hold by the tail, and eat him just as he is, head, fins, bones, scales, and all, and think that you had a most delicious morsel in hand at that. But then I intend to cook these."

"Cook them without fire?" asked Paul.

"We shall see about that. But, Master Paul, will you go to the boat and open that sack that I had in charge this morning, and bring the little wooden bucket that you will find in the mouth of it?"

Paul ran off without answering, and soon returned with the bucket.

"Now," said Jeannot, "you shall see that I will kindle a fire. I suppose you know what this is?" he continued, as he took a little round glass like the eye of a spectacle from his vest-pocket.

"Oh, yes," Paul answered; "I have seen one or two like it before: it is a sun-glass."

"It is of such a shape," said Jeannot, "as that, when held in a proper manner where the sun can shine full upon it, the

heat rays are converged, that is, brought together at a point. Now, if this glass has a surface a thousand times greater than the little point where the rays are gathered, the heat there will be a thousand times greater than at any point on the glass of the same size. I am going to kindle a fire among the leaves and shavings that I have heaped up in the *kitchen chimney*. See, the focal point is on that little piece of dry lichen; it smokes already; now it is blazing, the splinters around it have kindled. Ah, now we are about to have a fire! We will not have to eat raw pickerel for dinner after all."

Paul was delighted. "I did not think that a little sun-glass could be put to so good a use," he said. "If ever I leave home again I shall be sure to have a sun-glass with me. Why, Jeannot, I should think, from what you say, that a sun-glass as big as a cart-wheel, raised high enough over a river, would set the river to boiling, and cook all the fish in it in short order."

Jeannot rolled back his eyes until they were almost milk white. "Master Paul," he said, "I have no doubt you will be a great philosopher." He then took salt and pepper from the bucket and sprinkled them on the fish, that had been nicely cleaned and washed and cut into pieces. Then a piece of fat meat was taken from the bucket and cut into slices, and fish and meat were placed together into the broken kettle, that was hanging by its wire trammels over the fire, to be cooked. And Jeannot stood by holding a piece of reed in his hand that he had whittled to a sharp point, with which he was continually turning the frying pieces over and moving them from place to place, until the whole was thoroughly cooked and brown. The kettle was then taken from the fire, and François, who was still at work in the tent, was called and informed that dinner was ready.

During the whole time that Jeannot and Paul had been fishing and preparing dinner, François had been very busy. He had cut a short juniper log and split it into boards, then he had cut the boards into blocks, and these he had fashioned into a variety of shapes and kinds of table ware. So intent had he been all the time at his own work that he had scarcely taken the time to glance once towards the others at theirs; but now, as Jeannot called, he answered from within the tent, "Ay, ay, I am coming." And forthwith he went out and toward the kitchen. He carried in his hand a thick board of

oval form, about fifteen inches long and twelve wide. This he had shaved and scraped with his knife until he had got it very smooth and even, and through the middle of it he had cut a hole about six inches in diameter on the top side, tapering to about four on the bottom.

"What have you there?" asked Jeannot, with a puzzled look, as François came and stood waiting, holding the board in his hands.

"What but my waiter?" the steward answered, with an expression of mock indignation on his face.

"Did you intend that the victuals should be put into that hole in the middle of your 'waiter?'" asked the cook, innocently.

"The kettle is to be set into that *hole*, as you call it, so that there may be no necessity of removing the steaming victuals from it until it is to be placed upon the plates to be eaten," said the steward:—"an invention of my own, sir!"

"Capital!" said Jeannot, as he took the kettle out of its trammels and placed it in the hole in the waiter; "a most excellent gravy-saving institution, steward: capital, indeed!"

François then stalked off to the tent and set his waiter on the table. Paul, who was very hungry, followed close at his heels, for the contents of the kettle had a very inviting odor. But no sooner had the boy got within the tent than he halted and stared about in great amazement. François had made a little cupboard and propped it on slender legs in one corner of the room. It had two shelves and folding-doors that had canvas hinges. The provision-sacks had been brought in and their contents taken out and put into wooden dishes, and these set upon the shelves. Some of the plates were piled as high as they could be with ship-biscuit, others with meat, and others with cheese. On the dinner-table were four plates for the mother and three children, and near each plate was a reed fork having two sharp tines. As soon as the waiter containing the steaming pickerel was set upon the table, dishes of meat and cheese and biscuit were taken from the cupboard and placed there. Even little dishes containing pepper and salt were put in place.

Paul had difficulty to persuade himself that he was not dreaming at first, but when at last he recovered in some measure from his surprise, he broke forth into such hearty peals of

laughter that Jeannot came running in from the kitchen to inquire what had happened. There he saw Paul walking around the table, lifting each plate as he went, taking up each fork and examining it, and laughing during the time in the most uproarious manner.

François then went out of the tent and down the slope to the bank of the creek, where Marie and Lucie and the little children were still sitting on the green grass, under a cluster of great cypresses. He hesitated before speaking when he observed the unusually sad expression of Marie's face, and that traces of tears were still on Lucie's cheeks; but at last he said, "Will you take your children, madame, and come in to dinner?" Marie only gazed in silent astonishment into the man's face. "Dinner is hot, madame," continued François, "and is only waiting for you."

Still both mother and daughter stared wonderingly.

"Oh, mamma! mamma!" said Paul, as he came running down the slope; "do come and see what a nice house we have! and what a nice dinner is on the table waiting for us!"

"What can you mean, buddie?" asked Lucie.

"I mean that François and Jeannot have made a nice house for us, and ever so many nice things besides: but come and see; it is just beyond the thick cluster yonder, and not more than twenty rods from here. Come, dear mamma and Lucie; and come here, little Bobkins, and take my hand: I will show you the way."

Marie arose at the earnest entreaties of the little boy, and, with Lucie, followed him and Murat, whose hand he had, toward the tent. Upon arriving there and seeing what had been done, her surprise was very great. Lucie forgot her grief, and the woods resounded with her rilling laugh, and little Bobkins, as Paul called Murat, whom he loved tenderly, clapped his hands with delight, and forthwith began somersaulting over the *beds* and straw-covered floor.

A sweet, sad smile had come upon the mother's face.

"Forgive me, lady," said François, "if my manner may seem rude and my speech blunt, when I say to you what an honest heart dictates. It will be better for you not to give a loose rein to sorrow. Be courageous, and hope and be as cheerful as possible. Your case will be a sad one indeed if

you give way to despair. I heard your parting words to your husband, softly said as they were; and they were well said. Trust in God, and hope."

CHAPTER XII.

LIFE IN THE WILDERNESS.

FRANÇOIS and Jeannot felt greatly encouraged at the success of their first undertaking upon the island for the comfort and pleasure of the unfortunates under their protection; and more than ever were they determined to leave nothing undone that it might be in their power to do for them, and to make it their chief aim during this season of trial and affliction to divert the thoughts of the mother and her children from the gloomy channels through which they were most inclined to flow.

"We leave this place in your sole charge, madame," said François, as Marie and her smiling children seated themselves at the dinner-table. "It is a rude, uncomfortable dwelling, but rude as it is, it will serve as a shelter for you and your children until better arrangements can be made; gloomy as are both it and its surroundings now, there is light enough in hope to change the gloom to cheerfulness."

Marie thanked the generous men as much in the expression of her face as by words.

"Mamma and Murat and Lucie will sit at one side of the table, and we will take the other," said Paul to the men,—“will we not?”

"No," François answered; "Jeannot and I have already arranged to mess together at our own residence,—and then, Master Paul, I imagine it would be uncomfortable for three men to sit at table in the same chair."

"Where," asked Lucie, in some surprise, "is *your* residence?"

"Do you see yonder great pine?" Jeannot asked, pointing through the doorway of the tent.

"Indeed I do. I think it is the largest tree I ever saw. But I see no *residence* near it."

"But you will see one there before night," said Jeannot.

"I am—going to help—about building it," said Paul, biting off pieces of pickerel, chewing, talking, and swallowing, all at the same time.

"We shall be glad to have your assistance," said Jeannot, "not only in building the house, but in preparing some lamps for to-night's burning; it will be very dark in this forest to-night unless we shall have plenty of lamps burning."

"What do you mean, Jeannot?" asked Paul, as he placed another bone on the pile at the side of his plate; "what is it about preparing lamps?—surely you cannot make lamps too, can you?"

"There is but little need of *making* lamps here," said Jeannot, "where thousands of them, filled to the brim with oil, are scattered in every direction over the island."

Paul was greatly puzzled. He looked as if he desired to ask a dozen questions at the same time; but, strange to say, he did not utter a word, but only turned again to his pickerel with renewed vigor, nor did he raise his head once until he had finished his dinner.

After eating their dinner, the two men, assisted by Paul, went to work building a house under the great pine. Forks and poles were soon in place, and on these a roof of green branches was laid; armfuls of straw were spread beneath this, and the *residence* was completed. A great pile of dry dead wood was brought into *camp* for kitchen fuel, and then turn after turn of pine-knots were brought in and made into three heaps,—one between the *residence* and the tent, one a little beyond the great pine, and the third between the tent and the creek.

"Judging from the shadows that are deepening around us, I should say that the sun had set," said François. "We had better see to our lamps without loss of time."

"But where are they?" asked Paul; "and how does it happen that thousands of lamps, filled to the brim with oil, are scattered about in this forest, as Jeannot says is the case?"

"They were placed here," François answered, "by the generous sovereign who rules over these solitudes."

"Is it possible," asked Paul, "that any sovereign resides in and rules over this wild region? Who is it?"

"Her name is NATURE," François answered.

"It is a strange name for a person," said Paul. "How long has she ruled here?"

"Many thousands of years, Master Paul."

"Many thousands of years!—then she is older than Methuselah?"

"Yes, much older; and yet she is as active and beautiful as she was thousands of years ago."

"Really," said the puzzled boy, "if you did not look so serious, I should think that you were jesting."

"And yet I am not jesting; I have told you only what is true. Nature, my dear little boy, is God's creation, and all that is around us in this vast wilderness is as it was created. Man's busy, restless hand has not been near to mar the beauty of the Creator's work."

While François and Paul were talking together, Jeannot was at a little distance from them, busily at work with the axe splitting some of the pine-knots into pieces. "Come here, Paul," he said; "I have work for you: take these splits and pieces of vine, and tie the splits into little bundles with the vines. We must have the *parlor* lamps looking as neatly as possible."

"What are these sticks for?" asked Paul.

"They are to be made into little bundles for parlor use,—they are our lamps, Paul."

An expression near akin to disgust came upon the boy's face. "And the lamps that you spoke of are little bundles of sticks, then!"

"No, the lamps that I spoke of are those piles of knots; these bundles are lamps of an improved kind,—that is, they look cleaner and smoother, and are therefore preferable for indoor use."

"And the thousands of lamps, filled to the brim with oil, are those knots! Where is the *oil*?"

"Why, Paul," said Jeannot, "each one of those larger lamps has a full quart of oil in it; and excellent oil it is at that. Here, take this parlor lamp and go touch its wick to the blaze in the kitchen chimney, and judge for yourself whether there is oil in it."

Paul looked straight into Jeannot's grave face a time, then he burst forth in a loud laugh. "I never heard a bundle of split sticks called a lamp before!" he said.

"Then you have made a useful discovery," said François, who at that moment came up, and had heard Paul's remark. "You will soon be convinced that you hold in your hand a lamp filled with good oil."

Jeannot went off in the direction of the kitchen, carrying his arms full of knots and bundles of splits, leaving François and the little boy talking together. Night shades were gathering deep: only glimpses of the star-sprinkled sky could be seen through the thick foliage overhead: objects around were but dimly discerned, and weird was the gloam beneath the trees.

Neither François nor Paul had observed the departure of Jeannot; and they were surprised when François addressed a question to him and no answer was returned.

"Where can he be?" asked Paul, in some alarm. "Do you think, François, that there are bears near?"

"None that will attempt to hurt us, my little man; probably Jeannot has gone to light the lamps."

"Ugh!" exclaimed Paul, "how very dark it is! I shall wonder if we are ever able to find the tent until to-morrow."

Scarcely had Paul finished the sentence before a brilliant light flashed out near the tent. "What is that?" asked the boy, in considerable alarm, as he grasped François's arm.

"Jeannot has lighted one of the lamps. See how plainly objects appear now. There are the tent and the trees around it; there kneels Jeannot at the kitchen, holding the wick of another lamp to the blaze in the chimney; and there stand your mother and sister and brother at the tent-door looking on. Do you think you would have difficulty in finding your way now?"

"I declare," said Paul, "it is almost as light as day at the tent!"

"Let us go there," said François. "Jeannot is intent upon having an illumination. See! he has stuck the ends of a dozen or more of his bundles in the ground, and is now walking from one to another lighting the top ends. What a soft red light it is! and what a stream of black smoke is rising up toward the branches from each lamp! Suppose you now light the lamp that you have."

Paul held the end of his bundle to the flame, and was surprised to see how readily it ignited.

"What do you think of our lamps?" asked Jeannot.

"Their light is splendid," Paul answered; "and yet, Jeannot, they are but little bundles of sticks. Where is the oil?"

"Do you observe the thick, black liquid streaming down each lamp from the flame to the ground?"

"Why, yes, I see it *now*. What is it?"

"It is the oil I spoke of; the lamps are so brimming full of it that it is running over at the tops and being wasted on the ground. Now you will remember, Master Paul, that I said that you would in time get to be a philosopher. It was when you spoke of the big sun-glass that would boil the river and cook the fishes in it. Here is another grand subject for you: why should not these cheap lamps be used over the whole world, and none but these?"

"Does any other kind of wood burn in that way?" asked Paul.

"I think not," François answered; "there is no other kind, I think, that contains such a quantity of oil of the same character; this is called *lightwood*. I have no doubt you have heard of substances called turpentine, rosin, and tar, and that they are products of the yellow pine?"

"Yes," Paul said, "I have heard of them."

"Turpentine," François continued, "is, in its natural state, a thick, honey-looking liquid, and is contained in great quantities in the pine-tree. If one of these trees be chopped through the bark in the spring-time, turpentine will ooze out, and the wounded or bruised part becomes solid lightwood. At another time I will tell you more about this valuable tree,—the yellow pine,—how it is 'boxed' and 'scraped'; and of the quantities of turpentine that are 'dipped' from the 'cups'; and of the process the crude material goes through to be rendered into different articles of commerce."

"Why is this knot called *lightwood*?" asked Lucie. "It is very heavy."

"I do not know," François answered, "unless it be on account of the brilliant *light* it gives when burning."

The men then proceeded to build up three great fires near the three heaps of knots that they had brought in; for, being in a strange place, where they doubted not wild animals abounded, they deemed it prudent to have plenty of light during the

night. And Marie and her children withdrew within the tent and retired.

"What say you, Jeannot," said François, "to dividing the night so that one of us shall stand guard until midnight, while the other is sleeping; and the other from midnight until daylight? I see no necessity for both of us being on the watch at the same time."

"I am willing to do what you think best," said Jeannot; "but if you are not very sleepy, I would be glad if you will consent to stand the first watch, for I can scarcely keep my eyes open."

François made no objection to the proposition, and in a few minutes Jeannot was asleep.

For hours the faithful sentinel made his lonely rounds from the creek to the great pine; watching, listening, but seeing naught but the boat that was resting quietly upon the sleeping water beneath the cypress cluster, the great trunks of the trees, and the little buildings beneath them; hearing no sound except at times the barking of a fox in the chase, and the howl of some more savage beast in the far distance. It was long past midnight before he aroused his companion from his quiet slumbers and gave into his charge the post that he had been holding.

Jeannot had not made the round more than two or three times before he observed, at a little distance in the rear of the shelter under which François had stretched himself out for a good, sound sleep, two glittering sparks. For some time he continued to look, but the little sparks remained in the same place. They were the eyes of some animal upon which the light was shining. No doubt the creature had been attracted there by the scent of the provisions. The watchman took a blazing fagot from the fire and hurled it in the direction of the fiery eyes, and instantly they disappeared and were seen no more during the night.

Day at last began to dawn. At first the faintest glimmer of light came down through the thick foliage upon the sleeping camp; then objects became visible in the woods around; and it was not long before the watchman saw through the little open spaces in the tree-tops near him the rays of the rising sun gilding the tips of the green cones of the loftiest junipers in the vicinity. Not a soul had stirred yet. Even

François was sleeping there on the straw beneath the shelter, in the very position that he had at first taken, forgetful of earthly cares.

There was no further necessity for the sentinel to walk his lonely beat. There was the boat moored by her painter to the cluster of wild roses, resting quietly still on the sleeping creeklet beneath the cypress cluster; it seemed that she had not moved a hair's-breadth during the night, for exactly so she was at the coming of twilight on the evening before.

Jeannot stepped in and untied the painter, and pushed her along down the creek. Noiselessly he went, for fear the slumbers of the quiet sleepers might be disturbed. Soon the last bend in the winding creeklet was turned, and, looking through the green arcade before him, the beautiful lake was in view. The waters were as still and placid as on the morning before; aye, as the little craft went eddying slowly out from beneath the roof of lapping branches, Jeannot imagined that a scene so beautiful and peaceful had never before greeted his eyes.

He sits with his right hand resting on the end of the idle oar and gazes out. The long shadows of trees go reaching almost to the opposite shores. Yonder, upon the shady surface of the glassy flood, are dropped the pink and purple tints of clouds that float above; and other skies are seen beneath those floods that arch on downward from the dome above, forming the perfect sphere of softest blue, with zenith and nadir both before the eye and a spirit-land clad in summer green afloat between the two.

While Jeannot sat there silent and as one dreaming, looking in the direction of the head of the lake, a flock of white cranes arose to view and came winging on in a snowy platoon toward him. Slowly they flapped their slender wings; now rising higher than the trees, now swooping almost to the gleaming plain; now rising in a graceful curve again, now sinking near the flood, but still platooning on.

They observed not Jeannot, for his boat was in the shadow of the trees that hung above the creeklet's mouth; and there he sat and watched their flight until they came within thirty rods of him, when again they swooped down, and this time alighted in the shallow waters near shore.

All unconscious of a stranger's presence, the beautiful birds

sported about in the water ; now dipping their heads beneath the surface, now stretching up their long necks and shaking the spray about ; now plashing and washing their white wings, and now having a dance—a wild cotillon—all together, and spattering the water high.

But suddenly Jeannot grasps his oar ; the smile that had been playing on his face has disappeared ; cautiously he pushes his boat under the stooping boughs, and sits peeping out from his hiding-place.

Scarcely could he believe his eyes : a light skiff, paddled by one who was standing in the middle of it, came shooting out from the head of the lake upon the broad water, and seemed now to be approaching directly toward him. As it drew nearer, he saw that the paddler was an old man, whose white beard reached down to his waist. He stood erect, and dipped his slender paddle first on one side then on the other, seeming all the time to have his eyes fixed upon the cranes. And though the skiff continued to move on until it got within a few rods of the birds, they appeared not to be in the least frightened, but continued to play about as before.

At last the old man lifted his paddle into the boat and stood leaning upon it, still looking at the cranes. Two others were now seen,—one, a boy, who was sitting at the stern trailing a short steering paddle in the water behind him ; the other, a girl, who sat in the forward part of the skiff with her face toward the bow,—they, too, were looking at the cranes.

“ Call them, Fawn,” said the old man, addressing the girl, “ and let us return.”

As she arose to her feet, Jeannot saw that she was very beautiful. She appeared to be about fourteen years old. Her long black hair hung loosely down over her neck and shoulders, and was kept off her forehead by a band of platted rushes. She wore neither shoes, nor covering for her head ; and her dress, which extended but a few inches below her knees, was made of the soft skins of the speckled fawn.

Jeannot observed that while the girl stood there looking toward the birds, waving her hands, and moving her head and body in a variety of simple and graceful attitudes, the cranes, with their necks stretched up, were looking toward her and moving their heads about, as if imitating her gestures.

“ Call them, Fawn,” repeated the old man, “ and let us return.”

Then in a musical voice the girl seemed to address herself to one of the birds: "Come, Gracie, with your children! Come; for we must return. Why was your flight this morning so far, Gracie? Was it because the sun was so bright and the sky so blue? or was it that you and your pretty ones desired to look long upon the white pictures you were dropping upon the sleek waters? Come, Gracie! Come pretty, vain ones!"

The cranes then arose, and after circling around the skiff three or four times, each time descending lower and approaching nearer to it, they alighted in it all around the child; and then she seated herself in their midst; and the birds fondled their heads and long necks upon her, each seeming desirous to attract her attention most toward itself. "Gracie is becoming very vain," she said, as she stroked the neck of one of the birds that had laid its head upon her shoulder: "she is very, very vain to love so to look upon her own picture. But Gracie is indeed very pretty, and she may be vain; and you too, little jealousies," she continued, placing her arms around the necks of all the others,—“you too are all very, very vain.”

The old man again dipped his paddle in the water, and, turning his skiff about, went off in the direction from whence he had come; and it was not long before the skiff and its occupants disappeared behind the green fringing at the head of the lake.

When Jeannot got back to the camp, after an hour's absence, he found that considerable excitement was prevailing there. François in all his imaginings had not been able to imagine the true cause of his absence and the disappearance of the boat. He had succeeded in conjuring up a hundred pictures before his mind, though not a bright one among them all. But when at last the anxious campers saw with their own eyes the little craft gliding around the head of the creek and Jeannot at the sculling-oar, the agony and suspense were at an end, and instantly François's gloomy panorama vanished from sight.

"Jeannot," said François, "your absence has caused me great pain. I have been imagining a hundred dark things,—that Pedro and his band had come upon you unawares and gagged you, or murdered you, and taken you away with the boat, and such like. I am truly rejoiced at your return. But where have you been?"

"I have been to the lake," said Jeannot; "but when I left here I had no intention of remaining more than——"

"I do not wonder at your remaining there," Lucie interrupted. "Was it not very beautiful?"

"Indeed it was far more beautiful than on yesterday——"

"Did you see a bear swimming about in it?" asked Paul.

"No; but I did see something much more surprising——"

"What?" asked Paul, stepping nearer to Jeannot.

Then Jeannot told of the cranes and the skiff, and the old gray-bearded man and the boy, and Fawn.

While Jeannot related his late wonderful experiences, a group of most attentive listeners was before him. Marie, holding her sleeping babe on her lap, sat on a log near the tent-door, the curtain of which was now lifted. Murat was lying flat on his back on the same log, his head on his mother's lap, near the baby's. Lucie's seat was on the straw-covered ground near her mother's feet. François sat on a stump at a little distance from the tent, stooping slightly forward and gazing into the speaker's face. And Paul stood only a few feet in front of the speaker, holding his hands behind him, gazing earnestly up and drinking every word that was said. Jeannot spoke with great warmth, and silent were all his hearers.

The tale was told. Neither Paul nor Lucie doubted the truth of a word that they had heard; a trace of skepticism was on Marie's face; François laughed aloud at Jeannot's *dream*; the babe was asleep; and little Murat had paid no attention whatever to the story, silent though he had been: for in truth his eyes during the whole time had been fixed on a little crimson-headed woodpecker that was clinging to the dead limb of a tree near by; and he had enough to do to wonder why it was that the bird continued to cling there and beat his head so unmercifully against the dead limb.

"How glad I would be to see Fawn!" said Lucie.

"I am sure I could steer a skiff with a short paddle," said Paul.

"Jeannot," said François, "you are in great need of sleep, and as the day is before you, it will be wise in you to retire to rest without loss of time; then, after five or six hours of good sound slumber you will be better able to see things as they are. Now I am very sure, from your serious and earnest manner, that you verily believe that you have witnessed the

things that you have told us about; but disabuse your mind, my friend, for believe me you have only been having a fanciful dream. You were very tired when you got out there and sat down on the stern-seat and looked upon the beautiful lake and its surroundings, and no doubt you dropped off to sleep in a few minutes; then, forthwith, you went to dreaming about cranes, and an old man with a long gray beard, and a beautiful girl clothed in fawn-skins and all that: it was natural enough for a *dream*, under the circumstances, and yet every man is not poet enough to have such a *dream*. Did you ever attempt the writing of poetry, Jeannot? If not, I would advise that you begin forthwith, for I doubt not you would prove a success. Put some of your fancy dreams into verse,—begin with this that you have had this morning: make a magician of the old man; give wings to Fawn; let the skiff be a chariot of gold, lined with the pearly scale that lines the shell of a Ceylon oyster; the rim of the wheels may be of agate, the hubs may be diamonds, and the spokes—well, they may be radiations from the glistening hubs, each spoke a distinct color, violet, indigo, blue, green, etc., or let them be mere silvery glitters, as you may prefer; harness the cranes, and let them draw the gorgeous chariot; put the ribbons in the boy's hands and let him drive; let Fawn ride as high as she will, or rather, as high as old Graybeard will permit, for be sure to have him conveniently by with wand in hand whenever his services may be needed. Take the hint, Jeannot, and my word for it you will have no cause to regret your pains and waste of brain, for a book of such poems will be sure to take, and ten to one if copies enough of it would not be sold to pay for the publication in full, and leave surplus enough after that to buy paper for another book, and that is saying a great deal for *home* poetry."

Jeannot, who stood patiently listening, was at first much inclined to get miffed, but there came such a comical expression upon François's face before he got through that every one present laughed, Jeannot as heartily as the rest.

"Well, François," he said, "I can only promise that you shall be convinced."

"Was the boy that had the short paddle as big as I am?" asked Paul, standing erect and stretching himself to the utmost as he spoke.

"I judge he was somewhat larger, Master Paul, but, as I only saw him sitting, I cannot positively say how large he was."

"What was the color of Fawn's eyes?" asked Lucie.

"I was not near enough to know that," Jeannot answered.

"Let them be soft hazel or jet black," said François, "either will be in harmony with the hair; let her have black, gracefully-arching brows, and lashes thick and long. Upon a second thought, Jeannot, I should let the old man hold the ribbons and ride, and leave the boy out of the poem altogether, for he was a lazy lubber to sit there steering with a short paddle, and leave that poor old man all the work to do."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CAMPERS PLAY HAVOC WITH THEIR NEIGHBORS.

JEANNOT, who had the last watch on the second night as on the first, agreeably to previous arrangement, awoke François very early on the next morning. "Come," he said, "arise and let us be going; it may be that *you* too will have a fanciful dream, and if so, you may take a share in my poem." Paul and Lucie were then called in a loud voice, and it was not long before both their heads were seen peeping out from beneath the tent-curtain.

During at least one-half of the night previous Paul had been lying wide awake, having the oddest fancies that could be thought of running through his head. He would imagine himself to be at the mouth of the creek, looking out. Soon a light skiff would make its appearance in the distance and come skimming along near to where he was; hundreds of milk-white cranes would accompany the skiff, some of them swimming along behind it, some at the sides, some before it, and some flying over it. He could see in the boat a stern old giant, with bushy, white whiskers extending down to his ankles; a beautiful, black-eyed girl, with a profusion of glossy curls streaming over her shoulders, bareheaded and barefooted, and clad in neatly-fitting garments of light-brown fur; and a boy,

not quite as large as himself, steering with a short paddle. And when at last he fell away to sleep, even then busy fancy continued her work; and he did nothing but dream and dream of beautiful bright lakes, and nymphs and mermaids swimming and diving about in the clear waters, or singing the sweetest strains that mortal ear ever listened to. Nor was the long chain of happy dreams once broken until Jeannot's voice was heard calling, "Paul, Paul, come, you and Lucie, for we are about to start out to the lake!"

The boy had not more than got his eyes open before he began calling out at the top of his voice, "Lucie, Lucie, Lucie, come! we are about to start off this very minute to see the old man and Fawn and the boy. Come, come, or you will be left!"

"Oh, please don't leave me, Jeannot!" said Lucie, as she put out her head and looked towards the men. "Please don't leave me, for I am coming now, and will not detain you a minute!" But after all the fear of being left, Lucie was the very first one at the boat.

The boat, containing the two men and Lucie and Paul, was moved quietly out, and carefully concealed under the drooping boughs near the creeklet's mouth, and there, to Jeannot's great chagrin and disappointment, the patient watchers continued for two long hours, and no glimpse in the time of cranes or skiff or the three strange persons; and the party returned to camp, Jeannot crestfallen, Lucie and Paul sadly disappointed, François firmly convinced that his companion had had a dream.

"François," said Jeannot, when the two men had got back, and were sitting upon a log under the great pine, "I feel quite sure that there is a creek that continues on back from the *head* of the lake, similar to the one at the foot of it; and I am equally sure, from what I have seen, that there are persons dwelling in this wilderness not far from us. Suppose we take the boat to-morrow and go out on a voyage of discovery? We may learn something to our benefit, and I have a great desire to know more of the strange people that I saw in the skiff."

François smiled. "I am as desirous of being informed about the place that we have come to," he said, "as you are; but I think we ought to be exceedingly cautious in our movements: danger may be crouching in ambush near us, ready to

rush forth and overwhelm us at any moment. No, Jeannot, it would not be prudent for us both to go from camp at the same time, and leave the defenceless mother and children here all alone; some terrible misfortune might overtake them in our absence, and then I am sure neither of us would ever after cease to censure ourselves. True, we must not cease to look about us in every direction for some path that will lead us again into the civilized world, when we shall be prepared to leave here, but the time to start has not yet arrived. We must not for an instant forget how high an office we have undertaken. We have volunteered to protect and care for the weak, to save them from harm, and to restore to them their natural protector; and this fact must be *first* in our thoughts, and all else secondary. For the time we are resting in peace (dark as the skies still are), and there is hope; but one false step may place us in a position whence hope will be hid. Let us hold our present advantage, then, with prudent watchfulness; let us be as cautious as the vanguard that feels its way through the dark ravines and defiles of the enemy's country,—as cautious as the outer picket on his midnight watch. Noble victory or ignoble defeat must be the result of our undertaking."

Jeannot could but admit that his companion's view of the situation was correct, and yet his desire to solve the mystery was ever on the increase. Morning after morning he pushed out to the lake, and sat watching from early dawn until sunlight came streaming over the wild scenes; yet morning after morning he returned disappointed to camp, for no skiff nor strange people made their appearance after that first time.

Nearly two weeks had passed quietly away at camp. During that time the men were continually busy at one thing or another,—clearing paths back into the woods, chopping down the small growth and removing it from the grounds around the tent, and making simple inventions for the pleasure and amusement of the children. Marie's was the only sorrowful face to be seen, for the children were continually declaring that if only papa were with them, they would prefer to remain a time in the peaceful wilderness rather than go back to the crowded city.

Much of François's time was spent in trapping, for which he had great fondness. Nor could he have found a better place to enjoy himself in that way. Game was so plentiful in the

forest around that it was not long before the campers had abundance of fresh meat on hand, and furs enough to make them comfortable through the coming winter, if it should so be that they would have to remain so long. A great number of odds and ends of things had been found under the bow and stern-seat of the boat,—odds and ends that had been accumulating there for years past; and many of these François and Jeannot now put to a good use. There were fall-and-tackle, pulley-blocks, iron hooks, nails, spikes, wire, a marline-spike, rope-yarn, cord, a quantity of old rope, flint-and-steel, tinder-box, punk, and other things, few of which would have been worth the having to persons differently situated, but every one of which were of so great value now as to be actually beyond price. Many of these things François had occasion to use in the construction of his traps, and others Jeannot found to be useful and convenient in the making up of his fisherman's outfit.

François had a score or more of traps, some of which were set away back a mile or more from camp. In these were taken great numbers of raccoon, mink, otter, foxes, wild cats, and other animals, and it was seldom that the trapper returned without bringing as much game as he could lug. The consequence was that in a short time a great number of skins were hanging on the trees about the camp, and it was a common thing to see a dozen or more carcasses hanging in the cool shade to be cured and dried for present and future use.

Jeannot and Paul preferred to fish in the creek. Master Paul was in a short time almost as perfect in the science of angling as his preceptor; and many the pickerel that were fried in the broken kettle.

Lucie and Murat, when the rest were away, would amuse themselves for hours together gathering green twigs and leaves and red berries, and weaving long wreaths and festooning them both on the inside and outside of the tent, and twining them around the bodies of the trees near by.

Marie, as has been said, was the only sorrowful one of the campers. Though thankful to her generous protectors, and glad that her children were happy, yet time was dragging along at a slow, sad pace for her. The life before her was a dark desert through which she could only grope, for it was a feeble ray that fell upon it. True, there was hope yet, but fear was ever whispering to her stricken heart that the worst had be-

fallen him for whom she sorrowed,—that he had perished in the angry seas, that he had been murdered by brutal hands, that he would never return to his loved ones. But then hope would say, He *may* live; he may have escaped from the clutches of those bad men; he may even now be near by, searching for the lost. She knew that it was best that they should remain where they were for the present, for it would be worse than folly to expose themselves to the dangers that could only end in their ruin, without accomplishing any good. Were it not that her little ones were in the question, she would advocate a different course, but their welfare must be thought of first of all; and she would prefer that they, with herself, should die in the wilderness, rather than that they should again fall into the hands of the desperadoes from whom they had escaped. Nor did she doubt but that the dwellers on the sea-coast were a rude people, who would resent in the severest manner the taking away of the boat; and so, in any view of the case, it would be but madness to return to the sea-coast yet, though there they must go in the end. Yes, for the present she would have to abide in the wilderness. All was with a merciful God, and she would bear up and hope still.

The twelfth day at the camp on the island opened with one of those tranquil mornings so common to the Carolina autumn. The sun had not risen high when François went to his traps, and Jeannot and Paul to their fishing, and Lucie and Murat to their gathering of leaves and twigs to weave into wreaths. All was calm and peaceful, and no sounds were heard except the woodpecker's clatter, and the occasional sweet notes of the swamp oriole ringing and echoing through the shady woods. Gorgeous scenes were on every hand, as seen from the lake. Near the water's edge were thick groves of the deep-green juniper, forests of gum and maple of thousand-tinted foliage arose like pictured hills behind the green, and farther still away, and loftier than all, the island pines as one great cone arose. And other groves, and other tinted mounds, and other towering pines were seen inverted in the dreamy flood; and all so softened, mellowed by sunlight that came streaming through the azure haze of Indian summer.

It was near noon as Jeannot and Paul ascended the slope from the creek, lugging their fish along.

"I think," said Paul, "if we go on at this rate, it will not

be a great while before we shall get every fish out of the creek: we have taken fifty before these ten; that is an average of five each day for the twelve days that we have been here. Really I hope that papa will consent to live here when he comes, for it is a nice place."

"And yet, Master Paul, there are better places than this to live at, and there are better things to do than to catch fish too; but see, François is just getting in with his game. What a load he has!"

"Indeed it is a load!" said Paul; "he cannot walk erect with it. Do you see how he is hanging his head and stooping forward? This is a lucky day for us all."

François, who was aiming toward the great pine, reached it at the same time that Jeannot and Paul did, and dumping his load to the ground, seemed to be very glad to be able to straighten himself up again. "Well, Master Paul," he said, as he raised the grizzly head of a great black bear, by its hair, before the boy's face, "you see I have at last captured Mr. Bruin. A noble fellow, too, isn't he?"

Though Paul, upon several previous occasions, had talked very courageously about killing bears, he was not slow now to step back to a respectful distance from Mr. Bruin's grinning head.

"Have no fears," said François, laughing, "for there is nothing here, as you see, but the head."

"One wild cat, one otter, two coons, two rabbits, and one mink," called Jeannot, counting the animals that François had dumped in a pile, "and besides all that, one bear. Really, François, you are playing havoc with our neighbors!"

"Why did you not bring the monster's body?" asked Paul. "Had it four legs?"

"I will answer your last question first," said François. "This bear had four legs, as other bears have; then, the reason that I did not bring the *body* is, because I could not: four or five hundred pounds is rather more than a man of my disposition fancies attempting to lug through a dense woods the distance of a mile. But I shall return to the trap for the skin, and *that* I will bring in."

"To put into your 'curiosity shop,' I suppose?" said Paul.

"Not exactly, Master Paul. We will before a great while have the cool weather upon us, and that skin will serve the place of a blanket; it has answered that purpose in part for

Bruin during at least half a century past, and, as he will have no further use for it, there is no reason why we should not appropriate it to our own use."

"A blanket of a bear-skin!" Paul exclaimed. "I am very sure that I for one will never sleep under such a blanket!"

"And why not, pray?"

"Why, François, I could not sleep; for I should be in continual dread of being devoured!" said Paul, with an expression of genuine horror upon his face. "No, indeed; no bear-skin blankets for me!"

"But you see that I have already cut off the biting part; don't you see it here in my hand? How could you be bitten by a thing that has no mouth,—no head in fact?"

"I know very well that a *bear-skin* cannot bite," said Paul, glancing at the savage head, "and yet I might *dream* that it could. I shall sleep under no bear-skin blankets, François!"

"Very well, then," said François, laughing heartily; "but if you will not consent to sleep under a bear-skin blanket, probably you will not object to dining on bear-beef to-day?"

"Bear-beef! is *bear-beef* proper food to be eaten?"

"I have never tasted it," said François, "but I know of no reason why it should not be wholesome food. The flesh is very coarse, and this old fellow is probably tough, but for all that I shall try some of it for my dinner to-day."

"What does the bear subsist on?" asked Lucie, who had come up to the group, and stood looking at the ugly head that François was still holding by its hair.

"He is both carnivorous and frugiverous," François answered; "that is, he feeds upon both flesh and fruits or vegetables. The black-gum berry (of which there is great abundance hereabout) is especially relished by him, and it is not an unusual thing to see the black-gum tree stripped of its branches from bottom to top,—the work of Bruin. Many times, while attending my traps, my attention was attracted to these trimmed trees, and I wondered what the cause could be, one of the most unaccountable things to me being that only this particular species of tree should be stripped. Nor was the mystery solved until yesterday. While going my rounds yesterday, and when well back in the desert, I was startled at the loud report of the breaking of a bough at a little distance from my path. After pausing a few minutes to

consider, I concluded to venture toward the point from whence the sound came, so as to learn the cause of it, for, having the axe and my knife along, I felt able to defend myself in case of an attack upon me. I soon discovered, nearly in the top of one of these black gums, which was but a few rods from me, a great black bear. One of his forepaws was grasping the body of the tree, and with the other he was bending the twigs up to his mouth and crunching the berries that grew on them. I was concealed from his view by a thick cluster of reeds; so I stood there for a full half-hour, peeping through the cluster at the brute, who seemed to be highly relishing his dinner. The limb from which he was eating was the one, no doubt, that I had heard snap: it was not broken entirely off, but was hanging down along the body of the tree. It was fully three inches in diameter, and how the bear could have broken such a limb, situated as he was, I could not begin to understand; nor had I supposed that so heavy and seemingly clumsy an animal could climb the perpendicular body of a tree for more than thirty feet. But I had not long to wait for an explanation of the matter, for, to my great astonishment, I saw another, larger than the first, ascending in a very nimble manner. The bear above ceased eating, and grinned down horribly at the intruder; but, as he no doubt fully understood the meaning of the grin that was returned from the upturned face, he left his place and ascended still higher, and forthwith prepared to *lap* another limb. The first thing he did was to fix himself in a good position in a fork of the tree; then, grasping the body of the tree with his left paw, he reached out his right as far as he could and seized with it the limb that he wished to snap. Then by a quick movement he put his whole strength and weight against it, and, after bending almost double, the bough snapped and hung down as the first. No sooner had the lower observed this than he ascended and took possession. Such angry snarling and snapping as then took place I never had witnessed.

“It then occurred to me to creep cautiously toward the tree and make a loud noise, so as to frighten them and cause them to fall or leap from the top of the tree; in either case I doubted not they would be instantly killed. So I crept on until I got within two rods of the tree, when a stick cracked beneath my feet, the noise of which instantly attracted the angry monsters’

attention. Only an instant they paused and glared down at me; then the highest one leaped clear of the tree and came heavily to the ground, while the other stuck his great claws in the tree and slid rapidly down, tearing the bark in a cloud as he came crashing on his haunches. I could not see them from where I stood on account of the thick undergrowth between me and the tree, but I rushed forward, holding the axe over my head ready to deal rapid and deadly blows if so be that a single spark of life should be left in them. But lo! when I got there both bears were up and gone."

"I hope I may never meet a bear!" said Paul, with a shudder.

"If you should do so, it is probable that you would turn and run one way and he the other, for he is an arrant coward. But where has Jeannot gone?"

"Here I am," Jeannot answered, as he came up dragging a great loggerhead by its tail. "I spied this fellow making his way toward the creek, so I put off in pursuit, and soon captured him."

"What sort of monstrous brute is that?" asked Paul.

"A turtle," François answered; "a noble fellow too: what a feast we shall have of him!"

"Feast!" said Paul; "feast! surely so disgusting an object is not good for food!"

"Good for food?" said Jeannot; "are you not fond of turtle-soup, Paul?"

"Turtle-soup!" Paul said; "I know of nothing better! But Jeannot, is it possible that turtle-soup is made of such things as that you are holding by the tail? See how he snaps at everything that comes near him! Ugh! if turtle-soup is made of such things as that, I shall eat no more of it!"

These earnestly-spoken words were followed by such loud laughter from both the men, that Murat came running up to inquire the cause.

"Murat," said Jeannot, "your big brother says he will eat no more turtle-soup."

"And I hope *you* will not, either," said Paul, as he placed his right hand on the little fellow's curly head. "Do you see that great ugly snapper, little Bobkins? Jeannot says they make turtle-soup of such things!"

"I am much afraid, Master Paul," said Jeannot, "that

after a little while you will be after dropping bull-frog also from your bill of fare."

"Bull-frog? Have no fear of that, Jeannot! I only wish we had frogs for our dinner to-day, instead of this ferocious reptile. I am sure I could eat half a dozen of them myself."

"I am sorry, then, on your account, that I succeeded in capturing only *four* this morning," said Jeannot. "It was by mere chance that I came upon a nest of them yesterday, and succeeded in getting a dozen; and it would not be reasonable to expect to have such luck as that every day. However, as I said, I took four this morning,—and much finer specimens they are than those of yesterday, too. See, I have them securely pegged to the bark of the tree; so that, if they should come to life again, they will not be able to escape. I have lost several in that way in times past, which caused me to put my inventive powers on the strain: the result is as you see there,—I have learned to keep them safely, dead or alive. Observe how simple the invention: after killing the frog stone dead, by mashing his head as flat as a pancake, I whittle out a little two-pronged peg, which I punch through one of his hind feet; then, using the handle of my knife as a hammer, I drive the points of the peg into the bark of the tree, as you see there. Now, let him come to life, and kick as he pleases: that peg will hold him!"

"A very ingenious contrivance!" said François. "Lose no time in getting a patent: it may prove a fortune to you!"

"Do bull-frogs come to life after being killed?" asked Murat.

"Aye, indeed," said Jeannot. "I am told that it has been known to be the case that even after the frog has been skinned, gutted, peppered, salted, and put on the fire to fry, he has taken an eccentric notion that he won't be cooked, and leaped out of the hot frying-pan and actually made his escape! Now, if it were not that Paul lacks two of enough for his dinner, I would take one of these fellows down and put him on the ground, with his fetters off. In a few minutes you would see him rise on his haunches; then he would open his eyes and wink them, one at a time; then he would gradually swell himself out, round and plump, again; and in two hours' time he would be sufficiently strong and calculating to strike off towards the creek in a bee-line,—in ten-feet leaps, at that! Yes,

Murat, you are never positively sure of bull-frog until you get your teeth on it!"

Paul was as still and as mute as an oyster during the whole time that Jeannot was speaking; he did nothing but gaze up at the frogs. There they hung side by side, each pinned by one hind foot to the bark of the tree; each with the long, unfettered leg hanging limberly down, and reaching several inches below the head: there they were, with their black backs, white bellies, green heads, wide mouths, and great, wild, protruding eyes, presenting a singular spectacle. All seeming to be dead, yet each twittering with convulsions at times, and occasionally winking his eyes. At last the astonished boy spoke:

"Are they not lizards?"

"Lizards? Certainly not!"

Paul was silent a moment; not once had he taken his eyes from the frogs: "Are they bull-frogs?"

"Indeed they are,—and fine specimens."

The boy's nose and upper lip curled slightly upwards, the lower lip slightly downwards,—every feature of his face took some part in assisting to make up the perfect picture of contempt and disgust. "I shall never more taste bull-frog!" he said. "I would starve first!"

The loud and continued peals of laughter that followed this for several minutes rang and echoed around.

That day the dinner-table groaned under the weight of steaming dishes, but Paul could not be prevailed upon to eat anything but ship-bread and fried pickerel.

CHAPTER XIV.

A MOONLIGHT EXCURSION ON PICTURE RIVER.

FRANÇOIS, who was ever getting up some new thing to please the children at the camp, and render them as contented with their condition as possible, proposed to them one morning, as they were all seated on the logs near the kitchen, that on the evening of the full of the moon (which would occur one

week from that day) they should make an excursion upon the lake, provided the weather should be pleasant and the skies clear; and provided the mother should give her consent.

He could have suggested nothing calculated to give them greater pleasure. They were in ecstasies at the very thought; and even Jeannot—who had no hint that such a proposition would be made—seemed highly delighted at the prospect of a moonlight excursion upon the water. “No doubt,” he said, “we shall have a very pleasant time of it; for the woods and waters, I am sure, will appear even more wild and beautiful by the full-moon light than they do in the day. Let us go on the excursion by all means.”

“Oh, by all means,” said Lucie. “I am sure mamma will not only consent for us to go, but I think she herself will go. Will it be a whole week yet, François, before the full of the moon? How I do hope it will be pleasant and clear on that evening!”

“Do not set your heart upon it,” said François, “until you have mentioned the matter to your mother and obtained her consent to go; for it may be that she will have good cause to object. Speak to her about it, and then let me know whether she favors it.”

“I know she will not object,” said Lucie, as she and Paul and Murat ran off as fast as they could go towards the tent; “but I will return, François, and tell you what she says.”

When the children got into the tent they found their mother sitting near her babe, that was sleeping upon one of the moss-beds. She had been weeping, for traces of tears were still on her face. Her deep grief, though seldom expressed by words, the sad face plainly enough told; and the lonely life that she had been leading for several weeks past only had the effect of deepening the heart’s wounds; and it seemed that at times, in spite of her noble patience and fortitude, she would fall under the weight that was pressing so heavily upon her.

Marie kissed and embraced her happy children.

“Are you ill, dear mamma?” asked Paul, anxiously.

“No, not ill, dear boy, but very, very sorrowful.”

“Mamma,” said Murat, “we are all going out in the boat to see the lake and the moon,—François and Jeannot, and Paul and Lucie, and me and baby and you,—we are all going; and won’t we have a nice time! Then I think we shall see the boy

that lives down under the water and has a cap like mine; won't we, mamma?"

"Yes, mamma," said Lucie, "François proposes to take us on an excursion on the evening of the full moon, which he says will be in a week from to-day. That is, we will go if you are willing."

"And it will make *you* feel better to go, dear mamma," said Paul; "I know it will. Will you not consent?"

"I cannot have it in my heart, dear children," said the mother, "to refuse your request; therefore, you have my consent, provided the weather be favorable. It may be that baby and I will also go."

Again the happy children kissed their mother; then they ran off with the glad answer to François.

Lucie, during that slow week, was in a state of continual nervousness. She feared that when the evening should come it would be a cloudy and unpleasant one, or that something might take place to prevent their going. Paul, too, was excited and impatient: he was continually counting the hours that intervened between himself and the promised gladness; and more than fifty times during that week of waiting he asked François and Jeannot whether they thought it would be clear, pleasant weather on the coming Thursday.

But, in spite of all the nervousness and impatience, that week passed in exactly the time that any other week had ever passed. And when Thursday evening came, the round moon arose over the still wilderness in unclouded splendor. The winds were asleep; not a leaf was seen to tremble.

"Come," said Paul to the men, before the shadows of evening had fairly begun to gather around the camp; "I think it is time for us to be going. I have been down to the creek, and bailed every drop of water out of the boat, so that mamma and Lucie may not get their feet wet. Look through there; is it not *moonshine* on the tips of yonder trees? Really I am afraid we shall be too late, after all! Is it not moonshine, Jeannot?"

"Yes, Master Paul," said Jeannot, "the moon is rising, and that is its light on the tips of the trees; but we shall reach the lake in good time, for all that."

"I think I have heard you say that the lake is prettiest at early morning, when the shadows upon it are long."

"True," Jeannot said; "but there is a very great difference in the appearance of things viewed by sunlight and moonlight. The lake is, indeed, beautiful when the slanting shadows of early morning are upon it; but you must remember that very many objects that are seen by sunlight would be invisible or but indistinctly seen by the brightest moonlight,—in other words, moonlight scenes have not the glorious brilliancy and distinctness of scenes by sunlight, however weird and beautiful they may be. The long shadows of morning hide but few of the leading features of the landscape; they tend rather to soften and mellow the picture that would glare without them, and render it, therefore, more pleasing to the eye; whereas night shadows are apt to conceal many of its choicest beauties."

"But why wait *here*?" asked Paul. "I am sure it would be as well to push out to the creeklet's mouth and wait *there* for the long shadows to draw in to the shores."

"There are reasons for not going out *now*," Jeannot said: "one is, that we are not yet prepared; another, that nothing would be gained, but much lost, by doing so. We are most pleased when the scene of glory bursts in all its brilliancy suddenly upon us. True, we may be pleased to sit and watch the gradual coming out of a glory scene, as beautiful feature after feature rises in the light; but the beauties in view prepare us for those that are coming, and when they come we greet them more tamely,—half the pleasure has come and gone with the expectation."

Paul said nothing more, but turned and sauntered down to the creek, and took his seat in the boat, with the mental determination to wait there until the rest of the party came.

The two men went off in another direction, and forthwith they began making preparation for the kindling of the fires which they intended to leave burning brightly during their absence.

"It occurs to me for the first time," said François, "that we are not acting prudently in deserting the camp as we are about to do, and that, too, at night. I am afraid that even the blazing of those huge fires will not be sufficient to keep back the hungry animals that are continually prowling near us. It would be a sad calamity if we should lose the precious contents of the cupboard; for, though we have no present need

for them, yet the time may not be far distant when we would not be willing to exchange our store of dried and smoked meats for the richest gold mine on earth. Not a night passes, as you know, but that that fiery-eyed monster is seen skulking noiselessly about under the shadows of the trees. Without doubt he has unfriendly designs, and is only waiting for a fair opportunity to execute them. At one time during my watch last night he became so bold as to venture within a few rods of me, and I was really fearful that he would make the attack in spite of me and the blazing fires and the burning fagots that I hurled at him. The skins and fresh meats that hang on the trees have been sore temptations to the hungry creatures for weeks past; and the addition of the quarter of bear that I brought in a few mornings ago will, in all probability, make them more fierce and daring to-night than heretofore."

"Suppose, François," said Jeannot, "that we go to work now and make a log-trap near our shelter? With your late experience at the business of trapping, and my assistance, I think it will not take long to make one; then, what an excellent bait a large piece of that bear-meat will make."

"A capital idea!" said François; "and strange it never occurred to me to set a trap very near the camp-ground, since the prowlers have been growing so bold. We will follow your suggestion, Jeannot."

The two men then went earnestly at the task, and in less than half an hour the trap was set and baited. The whole party then went and got in the boat; and in a few minutes they were moving along through the shady arcade toward the lake. They paused a time at the creeklet's mouth, and looked silently out on the quiet scenes.

"Be very, very quiet, my children," said Marie, who was entranced by the scene: "speak not, even in whisper!"

"Nor make the least noise upon the boat as we drift along with the sluggish current in the shade of this shore," said François.

"Nor even arise from your seats," said Jeannot.

"Nor fall into that water, little Bobkins," said Paul to Murat, who was kneeling in the bottom of the boat, leaning over the gunwale and gazing down at the picture. "You may depend upon it, if you were to shoot out of the boat headforemost from where you are, you would never stop going

down until you should find yourself standing on your head on that bright star directly under you; and I should say that that is at least forty miles beneath us."

"I wish I could fly about over the water," Lucie whispered.

Then quiet was restored, and for half an hour the boat went slowly drifting along the shore. No sound, not even a whisper, was heard during that half-hour; no sound, except now and then the hooting of the far-away owl, or the occasional crank of the gray-heron that was passing on her solitary way high above the lake, and away on still over the slumbering wildernesses,—so high her flight, so faint her seldom crank, that every sound seemed falling through the silvery blue from some far world to this.

"See! see!" said Jeannot, in tremulous whisper, at the same time pointing toward the head of the lake: "see! the skiff!"

François stooped forward, holding his right hand above his eyes to shield them from the light that glimmered around, and gazed intently: "Yes, a skiff!"

"A skiff!" said Marie, peering through the haze: "it is coming in this direction!"

"Let us hold fast to these boughs, Jeannot," said François, "and remain here quietly by the shore."

"Oh!" said Lucie, tremblingly, "we may see Fawn!"

"I wish I knew that boy's name," said Paul, vainly attempting to appear calm.

"Be quiet, now!" said Marie; "they are nearing us!"

"Will they not see us here and turn back?" Lucie asked.

"No," said François, "for we are here in the deep shade and have the dark line of woods behind us: but be very still, or they may hear us. There are three: the old man stands paddling. It is as Jeannot said."

"The old man has taken his paddle in the boat. How still they are!" said Jeannot.

"And what a lovely place they have halted at, in the opening of that bay!" said François. "How still they continue! not a word has been spoken yet. Sh!—the old man speaks!"

"This is the place, dear children. Could Echo and her fairies find a lovelier dwelling-place? How lightly falls the silvered veil upon yon trees! it may be that the airy sprites are resting now beneath them. Call, Timon!"

The boy arose and called, in a musical voice: "Ech-o!"

Soon was replied from the juniper fringing at the side of the bay—"Ech-o!"

Fawn then arose and called: "Sweet Ech-o!"

The answer came: "*Sweet Ech-o!*"

The old man followed in a deep bass monotone: "Ech-o!"

The answer came: "*Ech-o!*" and again, from the opposite shore, but more faintly,—"*Ech-o!*"

The three then called together: "Ech-o!"

Indescribably sweet was the answer of mingled voices: "*Ech-o!*"

"Let us not return until you sing your song of greeting to the Spirit of the Lake, Fawn. I am sure it will sound sweetly on the still waters."

Then the girl sang:

"Spirit of Picture River,—
Thou of the silvery speech,—
Hear when a maiden greeteth,
Hear when a sister pleadeth!
Wilt thou not come to me?
Oh, from thy hermit dwelling,
Curtained with gloaming shades,
Come through the silvern pathway!
Come to my bosom, sweet one!
Sister, come!"

Fawn paused, and a voice from the fringing sang: "Sister, come!"

"Would I might see thee, Spirit!
Would that these mortal eyes
Might for an instant see thee,
Might but behold thy form,
Know thy immortal beauty,
Though but a glance were all!
Come from thy hermit dwelling!
Come from the gloaming shades!
Come to this loving bosom!
Sister, come!"

Again a voice came rilling through the moonlight: "Sister, come!"

"Spirit of Picture River,—
Thou of the mellow voice,—
Oh, that I might behold thee!
Deep are the forest shadows,
Bright are the silvered trees,

Gleaming the placid waters,
Graceful the dewlit flowers
That are forever pulsing
Fragrance upon the air.
Oh, art thou these, immortal?
Dost thou appear in these?
Sister: These?"

The last words of the song were said distinctly, and in a clear, sweet voice; and they were answered from the fringing: "Sister: These?" And from points on the opposite shore came, in whisper: "These? These? These?"

The skiff then went gliding away toward the head of the lake.

"Dear Fawn," said Lucie, "how I wish I might take you to my bosom, and press my lips to yours!"

"So do I," said Paul, innocently. "And if Timon could be with us at the camp to-morrow, I would tell him how to catch pickerel."

"We must know more of these strange people," François said.

"But how are we to know more of them?" asked Paul.

"François," said little Murat, "bring your traps up this way, and set them. Maybe you can catch that old man in one of them, and then you can get the little ones without any trouble."

At hearing this remark, Paul clapped his hands over his mouth, and it was all he could do by hard pressing to keep from laughing aloud. For five minutes he dared not venture to speak. At last he raised his two hands an inch from his lips, and ready to be clamped back if the laugh should attempt to break out; and then, after several ineffectual efforts, succeeded in saying: "Who ever before heard of setting a log trap to catch an old man! But, then, suppose he should be caught, what would you have François do with him, little Bobkins?"

"I don't know," said Murat, thoughtfully. "Couldn't he cut off his head, and take it to camp, and nail it on the great pine beside the bear's, buddie?"

At hearing this question asked, in all seriousness, Paul tumbled over in the bottom of the boat, and lay there for some time on his stomach, holding his hand on his mouth as before, and now wellnigh convulsed.

The skiff had got more than a mile away when Paul raised up his head and looked towards it. There was a bright flash on the water, and then the skiff disappeared, and was seen no more.

"What was that flash?" asked Paul, bounding to his feet. "I believe they are fairies, after all!"

"It was only the curling of the sleek waters in the moonlight, caused by the old man's paddle, as his boat passed around the bend," said Marie.

François and Jeannot put out their oars, and it was not long before they had reached the creek and were making their way up toward the camp. But they had not got half the distance, when they were startled at hearing most unearthly wailing and screaming coming from the direction of the camp.

The boat was now enveloped in almost utter darkness, for she had reached a point in the creek where the overhanging foliage was so thick that not a moon-ray could penetrate it. François and Jeannot sprang to their feet, and for a time stood motionless, grasping their oars ready for defence, waiting for the danger, and wondering what those dreadful cries could mean.

Marie hugged her babe closer to her bosom, and trembled; Paul and Lucie got as near as they could get to her; and little Murat slided to his knees from the thwart upon which he had been sitting, and buried his face in his mother's lap.

"Ah, now I understand!" said François. "We have caught the prowler, Jeannot. Let us hasten on; for, in all probability, he is only held by a paw, and if we don't get there soon he may escape."

Then the boat went rushing on to the landing.

The fires were still blazing brightly at the camp.

François leaped to shore and ran with all speed towards the trap, only pausing at the kitchen long enough to snatch up the axe. There, sure enough, was the monster, held fast by both his forepaws. A great, fiery-eyed panther.

When the brute turned his head and saw François approaching with the uplifted axe, his cries became terrific and his efforts to escape desperate; his great teeth snapped fiercely, and his eyes fairly blazed.

"Wait, wait!" said Jeannot, who came running up, bearing

a stout club in his hands. "Wait, and let me assist you." But by the time he reached the trap François had dealt a powerful blow on the brute's head, which laid him sprawling at full length. This blow was rapidly followed up by others, until the ferocious monster was quite dead.

"Now you may lie there, my noble fellow, until morning," said François; "then I will take off that sleek brindled coat that you have been wearing, and appropriate it to my own use."

"I have never seen a more savage-looking brute," said Jeannot. "Had he known his own power, and been less cowardly, he might have routed our entire army with all ease."

Jeannot had scarcely finished speaking before the men were startled at a sound near by, as of some heavy weight falling to the ground, which was instantly followed by loud and piteous wails.

"There goes this fellow's mate," said François. "She heard his wails of distress, and came to relieve him. Listen! her cries grow fainter and fainter as she speeds farther and farther back into the wilderness. I should have hesitated before venturing up if I had known that she was sitting on a limb almost immediately over her suffering mate, glaring her fierce eyes at me, and, no doubt, almost persuaded to pounce down upon my head. I think I shall pause long enough next time to glance around me."

"Jeannot," called Lucie, from the tent, "please come here, for Paul will neither sleep himself nor suffer others to do so until he can speak with you."

Jeannot hurried towards the tent. "What would Master Paul have with me?" he asked.

"I wish to know," said Paul, from within, "what it was that wailed and screamed so dolefully."

"It was a huge panther that François has caught in a trap that he set near the great pine, just before we started on the excursion."

"Is the panther dead?"

"Yes; and you will see him in the morning."

"I am very glad," Paul said, venturing to poke his head outside the curtain, "that it was only a panther."

"What did you think it was?" asked Jeannot.

"He has had all sorts of fancies about it," said Marie. "That the people we saw in the skiff were fairies, who vanished in a flash, when they discovered that we had been watching them, and flew here in advance of us and expressed their anger by those horrid cries, and the like. I thank you for coming, for now that he knows the truth of the matter I think we shall be able to rest."

"Why, Paul!" said Jeannot, laughing. "Fairies, eh? Oh, no; the sounds you heard were the screams of a panther,—a much more hurtful animal than a fairy."

"I am glad of it," said Paul. "The fact is, Jeannot, after seeing that flash on the water, and observing that the skiff vanished immediately after, I began putting that with what Murat said about cutting off the old man's head and nailing it to the tree; then I remembered the long beard, and Fawn's strange dress, and what you told us of the cranes, and I became a coward, and was much frightened at the screaming; but I shall not be a coward again."

"I hope not," said Jeannot. "For I had rather see you a brave little man, Master Paul."

CHAPTER XV.

MAKING NEW ACQUAINTANCES.

FRANÇOIS was at last convinced that the skiff and the old man and Fawn and the boy were realities. He could think of nothing else, and not one hour did he sleep during the whole night.

It was arranged between the men that Jeannot should start out the next day to learn, if possible, something about the strange people who must have their dwelling somewhere above the lake, and that François should remain to protect the camp.

So early it was on the next morning when Jeannot launched out on his voyage of discovery that at the sunrising he had reached the head of the lake. Feeling the necessity of being

extremely cautious in his movements, he was continually looking about him, as he sculled his boat noiselessly along, and listening for the slightest sounds. But nothing was to be seen but the beautiful river and the wild forests that bordered it, and nothing heard but the pattering of dew-drops on the leaves.

He found (as he had supposed was the case) that a narrow creek continued on back into the wilderness from the head of the lake, and into this he passed and moved on for the distance of about two miles, when, turning an abrupt bend, lo ! another lake, much smaller, but as wild and beautiful as Picture River, was before him.

No sooner had his boat moved out into the lake than Jeannot discovered, standing in the water near the opposite shore, a flock of white cranes, and near them, tied to a little cypress that grew at the water's edge, the skiff he had seen more than once before.

His first impulse after making the discovery was to push his boat hurriedly back into the creek, and wait there, peeping through the tangled growth, for the coming of Fawn to the shore (for he doubted not but that he was near the dwelling of the old man), but the cranes had discovered him, and already they were stalking through the shallow waters towards the shore ; their long necks were stretched up to their utmost extent as they marched on, with measured step, and keenly eyed the strange intruder as they went. Upon reaching the dry land the cranes halted ; a time they stood there as motionless as if they had been figures of marble ; then, as if by one movement, every wing was spread, and the beautiful creatures went clumsily flapping up among the trees, and were hid from view.

A minute longer Jeannot continued to stand there,—watching, listening,—then dipping the oar-blade into the flood again, he sculled towards the skiff.

The farther on he floated, the broader and bolder opened out the view before him. The land towards which he was approaching was an island in the lake, and until now the white bodies of the great beeches that covered it had been concealed by the wild, green fringing at the shores. Nor were these all that had been hid from view : behind the tree to which the skiff was tied a little maiden stood ; her face was from the

lake, but, from the dark hair and speckled dress, Jeannot knew that it was Fawn.

Again the cranes were seen. They had alighted side by side on a high branch of one of the beeches, not far from shore, and it was at them that Fawn was looking when he discovered her.

Jeannot stood motionless again,—scarce breathing now,—looking at the little barefoot maid; the placid lake had not a ripple on its face, save from the drops that pattered from the oar-blade over the stern; and Fawn turned not from gazing at her birds.

“What means this, Gracie? And why have my pretty ones gone away up there in the tree?” asked the child. “Were you so impatient that you could not wait for me at the water longer? Have you ceased to love to sport in the calm lake? You were never impatient before, however long my coming might be delayed, for when you tired of sporting in the flood I never failed to find you, when I came, standing by the shore, with your long necks arched, your bills beneath your wings, and you asleep. Come, pretty ones! The skiff is waiting now. Why will you not come? Why do you stand there, stretching your long, white necks away below your feet, and staring so wildly toward the still waters?”

The old crane, as if in reply, uttered a low guttural sound, reaching down her head as she did so even lower than it was before, raising her crest, and moving with mincing step still farther from the lake.

Fawn turned to look, and there stood Jeannot in the boat, near shore.

An instant she remained there, gazing wildly.

“Beautiful Fawn!” said Jeannot.

Then turned the little maid and sped away, and soon she was hid from view. Then, too, the frightened cranes took wing, and Jeannot was alone.

Beyond the place where Fawn had disappeared, Jeannot saw a little thread of airy blue smoke rising up among the branches, and while he stood there hesitating, and undecided whether to follow her or not, the old man with whose face he was familiar appeared, and approached with nimble step toward him. An expression of astonishment was upon his face, as he halted there near the water’s edge and looked out at the strange

comer. "Who are you?" he asked, sternly, "and why are you here?"

"Not for harm am I here, reverend sir. I am one of a band of unfortunates, and happen here, as it were, by accident."

"One of a band?" asked the old man, in the same stern voice and as if doubting. "Where are the others?—and *how* unfortunate?"

"You may know of a sandy ridge, covered with lofty pines, that is reached by a creeklet from the broad lake a few miles below this place; my companions in misfortune are there: they are a man, and a patient, trusting mother, and her four children. We were wrecked in the recent severe tempest, and have wandered here."

"A mother and her children?" said the old man, in a softer tone. "Have those children a father?"

"They *had*, at the coming on of the tempest,—a kind, loving father."

"And he was drowned?"

"Hope continues to say not."

"Separated from the rest, and not yet found?"

"Aye."

"Pray God the father may be restored to his family! Ah, when the kind father dies, it is as when the frosts of autumn fall upon the flowers! Skies that were all light and beauty become dreary and dark indeed when the eyes of the affectionate father and loving husband cease to shine. She that fondly and trustingly leaned upon him is left to reel and stagger on through the chilly gloom, sorrowing as she goes. They, that had known life as one day of peaceful light, look up in vain for their beautiful skies. Ah, how chilled their world becomes when the sun that warmed it has sunk beneath the horizon! How dark the pathway through it still, untrod! The widow and her trembling ones step forth and grope their way along the freezing path beneath the cloud-draped skies. Poor widowed one! poor fatherless! how lonely is the journey now! Pray God, sir, the kind father and husband may be restored!—aye, pray God it may turn out that light is concealed from the loving, trusting ones by only a passing cloud!"

Jeannot told the old man about the wreck, and about the mutiny of Pedro and his band, and the part that he and François had taken in it, and how they had happened to make

their way to the island of the pines. He also told him about his having witnessed the flight of the cranes in the lake, on the morning after they had encamped, and about having heard Fawn's song on the night before; and how François and himself, upon their return to camp, had planned that he should make this expedition in the hope that something favorable to them might be ascertained.

"It is a sad case," said the old man, "but *she* is a true wife and mother that continues to hope and trust, though clouds of adversity arise and thicken around, hiding her world that was beautiful beneath their shadows; only the true woman can bear up in such a case. Thank God there are such!"

"See! see!" exclaimed Jeannot, "see the great bear that comes cantering toward you! Get into the boat and let us push back into the deep water. Quick, or he will be upon you!"

The old man turned his head very deliberately, and looked toward the brute in an unconcerned manner, though it passed along so near to him that he could have touched it with his hand.

But Jeannot was stupefied with horror at seeing bruin pass along by the old man, and come and leap nimbly into the boat. He was on the very eve of plunging over the stern into the lake when, glancing back, he observed that the bear had seated himself saucily on the bow-thwart, and was making no show of advancing farther, at least for the time.

"Grill! Grill!" said the old man, in a commanding tone, "you are very unmannerly! come back! Be not alarmed, sir," he continued, addressing Jeannot, "Grill is but one of our many pets. Come out, I say, Grill!"

The bear turned sullenly about and leaped back to the shore, where he seated himself upon his haunches and resumed his unamiable leer into the new-comer's face. Often he would wrinkle his nose and roll back his lips, showing the two great rows of teeth, seeming only to be waiting for the old man's command to charge. Under the circumstances, Jeannot deemed it prudent to fall back to deeper water, which he did without loss of time.

"Grill! Grill!" said the old man, "you are uncivil: go back!"

The brute arose and slunk sullenly away, occasionally turning back his grizzly face, and grinning horribly.

"Have you no fear of such pets?" asked Jeannot, "and do you apprehend no danger from them?"

"None whatever," the old man answered. "The wild animals around us are our only neighbors, and long years at this place have rendered us so familiar with their habits and disposition, that whenever I come in contact with the most savage of them it is not only without feelings of fear of them, but really in a friendly and patronizing spirit. Civilized man regards the wild beast as his enemy because it is the disposition of the brute to shrink as far back from the light of civilization as possible; and, regarding it as his personal enemy, he wages continual warfare against it, and is ever aiming at its extermination. But it is a well-known fact that the most ferocious animal may readily be brought to be man's most humble servant. How formidable are the elephant and the lion in a wild state! What animal is so ferocious as a wild boar or bull? The horse and the reindeer are brought most unwillingly to face civilization; but take these animals in a domesticated state, and what valuable servants they are. Even the most venomous serpent may be tamed and rendered harmless. True, all rules have exceptions; but exceptions are sometimes taken for rules. Most of our fear of wild animals is, I am disposed to think, but the effect of education. The most ferocious of all animals is man himself. He is more to be dreaded than the lion or tiger, because he is fiercer, bolder, and more aggressive; and, in truth, not only the brute but man himself fears man more than all other animals. The lion and tiger will flee from the presence of man, though they have the power to destroy him in a moment of time,—they flee because they *know* that he is their superior. This is not theory with me, for I have made a practical test of it, and am satisfied that what I say is very truth. I say I have learned to know my superiority over the brute, and therefore I have long ago ceased to fear him."

"But," said Jeannot, "the brute has not reason, and is it not to be feared on that account?"

"True," the old man said, "it has neither reason nor the power of speech, yet it is wonderful how readily it can be brought to *understand* man's speech and signs and gestures.

When I wish to tame and train a wild animal, the first thing I do is to convince it that I am its superior, and that as such I must be obeyed. I give it to understand that, as my servant, it must be attentive to my words and gestures, and obey me; and that punishment is the consequence of disobedience. When it has well learned these it never forgets, and is ever after my willing servant. A long time in some instances is required to accomplish thorough training, yet it may be accomplished. The lioness from the forest could never be thoroughly tamed; her *cubs* would be more docile than the mother; and, with proper care, the generations after *them* could be as easily managed as common cattle are. Did you observe how readily Grill obeyed me? and how he turned his eyes toward the ground when I commanded? He fears to look in my face except when I approach him kindly. But look yonder! Timon stands looking at us while Grill and his mate stand one on each side of him. I understand from the way the bears prick their ears and gaze in this direction that they desire much to come, but the boy's command (though spoken so low that we are not able to hear it at this distance) keeps them where they are."

Jeannot looked: there stood Timon between two bears, with a hand resting on the head of each. The trio were gazing toward the boat,—the boy and the bears equally wrapped in wonder at what they saw.

"I think," said Jeannot, with a shudder, "that I should never be able sufficiently to divest myself of the dread that I have for savage animals to be on such familiar terms with them."

"You think so *now*," the old man said, smiling, "but solitary life in a place like this for a few years would bring you to think otherwise; in all probability you would seek their society for the pleasure of it. Man must have companionship or he must be miserable."

Jeannot heard the old man with great pleasure, and was surprised that a person so intelligent could content himself to dwell at such a place; and that, too, in the face of his own theory that man is a social being. He desired much to be made acquainted with his history, and to learn how it happened that he lived there; but it was now growing late, and he feared that if he should remain longer François would think that some

accident had befallen him ; so, after saying to the old man that he would probably see him again in a short time, he bade adieu to him and made his way back to the pine island.

CHAPTER XVI.

SAVED.

PIERRE DE L'AUZANNE was inconsolable when, with the gig's crew, he boarded the tempest-tossed ship and learned that Marie and her children had been compelled to leave it in a small boat with the ruffian, Pedro, and his desperate followers.

This was all unexpected. It had not once entered his mind that even such desperadoes were capable of committing so cruel an act. And now he felt that there was nothing left for him to live for, and that death—nay, even madness—would be a relief.

For a time he could do nothing but wring his hands and moan piteously, and call the names of his wife and children, bewailing their loss. “Oh, my Marie! have you and all your dear little ones gone from me indeed forever? Shall my eyes nevermore rest upon you in this life? Has the cruel ocean swallowed up all my dear ones? Nay, worse a thousandfold, have my precious wife and children been exposed to insult and injury, or has the murderer's hand fallen upon their innocent heads? Oh, my Marie! Oh, my sweet little flock! shall I see you no more,—nevermore?”

“I should say, cap'n,” said Stam Weathers (by way of consoling the deeply-afflicted man, for whom he had begun to feel a lively interest), “that the best thing for one in your fix to do is to hold your head well up. It ain't the right sort of a cap'n that will give up the ship when it comes on to blow fresh, for it's the cap'n's place to stand by the hellum through thick and thin; and the thicker it is the more he's needed there. He can't save the ship every time, let him do what he will; but if she's got to go under anyway, it's his place to have his hand on the hellum when she goes, and to go down steerin'. Not as I means that the cap'n should drownd hisself

if he should lose his ship,—oh, no; for when he finds she's gone anyway, spite of all, he'd ought to look around and do for them that's strugglin' in the water. Maybe there's a spar or somethin' afloat in his reach, and maybe so he may help some to git on it; but then s'posin there shouldn't be nothin' but a plank in his reach, little as it may be, let him grab it, and hold on too; for what's the use of sinkin' if better can be did? Maybe he can worry his plank along till he gits it where others can take a hold, and then maybe him and them will be saved after all. Now I should say, cap'n, hold on to your little plank and keep your courage up. Here's the way I looks at things: That little boat that went off from the ship with your folks in it got swamped, or else it got to shore safe. If she swamped, why there's the eend on it; but, if she *didn't*, then, like as anyway, your folks is somewheres on North Banks this minit, and if so be they got there safe, like as not they're safe yet. You left this same ship in a little boat, and you got ashore; and, what's *harder* to do, you come from shore in the same little boat back to the ship, and here *you* stands yet. Then maybe they're as safe and sound as you is,—don't you see? But anyways, cap'n, there's no use o' lettin' go your little plank and sinkin'. Hang on, I should say, stronger'n ever, and for what you knows you'll pick up some o' them that's keepin' their heads out o' the water yet, and maybe that little plank will take you and them clean to the beach; but anyways, cap'n, while you've got a hold on it, keep your courage up and hang on."

No time was lost by Stam, and Len, and Sol in raising a second jury-mast abaft the one that was already up; and, in spite of the rolling and pitching of the ship, that second mast was, in a little time, stanchly rigged and a sail bent on it; for what the consequences of one short hour's delay would be were well known to those men, whose lives from the first dawning had been spent amidst tempestuous scenes, and to whom the black skies, the screaming winds, and the roaring floods were not strange; and yet, with all their haste and earnest work, the ship had got within two miles of the beach when that little second sail was raised to the wind; and still she was creeping and creeping in to her certain destruction, unless the lately completed work should prove to be a success.

While the three men were laboring at their task, Kate was

ever near them, and as busy as the busiest; now lugging a coil of rope; now holding in place the sail that was being bent on; now using the marline-spike as any man could use it; now lashing and splicing with nimble hand; and now hauling away with the rest to get the spar in place and the sail spread to the breeze.

At times, while the work was going on, she would be running here and there, obeying the orders of her husband, or of Len or Sol (for they were officers now, and she was but a seaman before the mast, whose duty it was to obey orders); now she might be seen gliding into the cabin; now descending through the hatchway into the deep hold; and now hurrying forward and disappearing in the forecastle; yet always she was soon returning with something that she had been sent to bring, and then again she was ready to obey a new order.

And even after the mast was raised and rigged, and the sail hoisted and the sheets hauled flat, the little woman rested not. It seemed that she knew intuitively what needed to be done next, and her heart was willing and her hands ready to do what she could of the work.

After the work upon the second jury-mast was completed, and while the three men were hurrying about the decks, putting the things, that were in great confusion, in as good order as they could in the few minutes that they had to devote to the work, Kate ran aft; for she felt that now her presence was most needed there, where she could speak words of encouragement to those who were laboring faintly and wearily at their post. "Hold on a spell longer," she said,—“a little spell longer; then Stam and me and the others yonder will come and rest you. We'll soon have her runnin' away from shore. A little spell! There! they are comin' *now*!”

“May God reward you, noble woman!” said the captain of the ship. “May he reward you, and these brave men!”

Stam and his companions came running aft to take the tiller, at which four feeble men were tottering, and near which four others had fallen and were asleep. “Cap'n,” said Stam, “we ain't got no pilot's license, but we can tote your ship away from land for all that. You needn't be afeerd to give up the hellum to us, for we means right, and we knows what's needed to be did besides.”

“Bring us water and food from the cabin, good woman,”

said the captain; "there is plenty there, as you will find, and yet we are famishing and starving."

Kate ran to the place to which she was directed, and soon came back bringing water and something to eat. The weary men partook of these, then laid themselves down, and were soon as soundly asleep as their companions who had fallen there before. The ship steered easier now, and before the coming on of evening shades she had got so far away seaward that the coast could be but dimly seen by those brave ones at the helm.

"Git things ready for to-night, Kate," said Stam, "for it's goin' to be ugly bimeby. We shall soon need a light here in the binnacle, for the wind mought change, and then we should want to see the compass. If there's any lanterns to be found, light one and hang it in the for'ard riggin' if you can, for it would go hard with us to git run into to-night, dark as it's goin' to be."

Kate needed not to be told twice. It was not long before there was a lantern hanging in the rigging and a lamp burning in the binnacle. Then another lantern was put in a convenient place to be found if needed during the night. Water and food were also placed where they could be found, if it should so be that the weary ones should arouse and call for them.

"Now go yonder, Kate, and drag that c'il o' rope this way," said Stam. "Make the eend of it fast to this cleat. Mind you takes a good hitch and makes it fast and solid, for it mought be needed by some or all of us before mornin',—no tellin'."

And so one thing after another was done by way of making preparation for the coming night, that was already beginning to gloom and deepen around, and that ere long spread its broad curtain of utter blackness over the troubled deep.

Still near the tiller lay those eight weary ones when night came on, forgetful now in sleep of the hardships and dangers through which they had so recently been passing; and there at the tiller were Stam and Len and Sol and Pierre,—the ghastly light from the binnacle at times glimmering upon their faces as the ship went rolling and plunging along through impenetrable gloom.

"I'm ready to help when you wants me there," said Kate to the men at the tiller; "for ther' ain't nothin' else to be done here as I knows of." But she had scarcely finished the

sentence when one of the men arose from the deck to a sitting posture, and cried out, in a distressed voice, "Water! water! water! Oh, give me water! I am burning!"

"Wait a minit," said Kate; "just a minit. I'll fetch it." And within a minute's time the famishing man had the pitcher to his lips. Then food was brought, and he ate.

"Thank God!" said the grateful man. "But who are you that has brought these good things? I know not the voice, and yet you are an angel or a woman; and it's hard telling one from the other of them, when they come like you have done now. But which are you? Are we about to make heaven for harbor, and you've come out to pilot us in?"

"We've boarded the ship," said Kate, "and is workin' her off land."

The man heard not the words, for he was asleep again.

All through the dreary night those brave four stood firmly at the helm, and the weary eight lay slumbering on the deck. All through the dreary night Kate remained at her post of duty,—now hauling flatter the sheets as the ship was luffed, now easing them off a little, and now lending a hand at the tiller to relieve, if ever so little, the constant strain that was upon those who had it in hand. And when at last that long, dreary night came to a close, the tempest was wellnigh spent. Nothing could be seen from the ship's decks but the great billowy-sea on every hand. The wreck was saved.

The captain and his men aroused from their slumbers and arose greatly refreshed, and ready to enter upon the lighter duties before them. Their gratitude to the brave salvors knew no bounds. "Brave people," said the captain of the ship, "you have saved our lives, and the ship and her valuable cargo. All that we have would not pay the debt that we as individuals owe to you; but, besides that, the ship and cargo owe you a rich salvage, to demand and secure which you have only to go with her into port, which in all probability will be reached before another night; for Cape Henry is not far distant, and in less than an hour the wind will be fair enough to lay our course without trouble."

"No," said Stam, "it warn't for salvage that we run the risk of boardin' the ship, but to save you and her: now that's done and we are satisfied. We'll not go on in the ship, neither, but make our way back in the boat we come in; and now, if

you'll swing us over the side of the ship, we'll be off, for it's a good smart jump from here to the North Banks beach."

"Can it be possible!" said the captain, in unfeigned astonishment. "And have you indeed come upon the mission of mercy, at the risk a thousand times of your own lives, through motives so noble, so generous, so unselfish, and claiming no higher reward than the satisfaction of having done good? But think again, brave people,—we owe you all,—the ship and her cargo are not enough to pay the debt that is justly due to you."

"Stam has told you right," said Len Curt; "we didn't come for *salvage*: we've got what we come for, and we don't want no more."

All this time Kate was standing somewhat in the background. She heard the words of those grateful men,—their prayers for God's blessings to rest upon their generous deliverers,—their words of praise of the heroic deeds that had been performed. A glad smile was upon her face; her heart swelled with pride at hearing those praises bestowed upon the brave man who stood nearest to her; for well she knew that both he and his rugged companions deserved the thanks that they were receiving. But not once had she thought of herself as being one of the "brave people" addressed; for what had *she* done but to hope that the ship and the precious souls upon it might be saved?

"Come, hearties," said Stam, "le's be off: the gig's waitin', and the wind and sea is fair. It ain't smooth yet; but I guess we can fetch the land to-day, and with less work, maybe, than it took to git away from it yisterday. Git in, Kate, and take the steerin' oar. It was you that fotch us here all safe and sound: if you can't take us back there's none that can, now Ike Drew is gone."

"One word, noble woman," said the captain of the ship; "one word before you leave us. For myself and these, whose lives you have been the chief instrument, under heaven, in saving, we thank you with truly grateful hearts. May the arm of the great God be ever above you and yours, to shield you from harm, and to guide you through the glooms of life, and to bring you to that peaceful and beautiful harbor that tempest winds can never reach, and where cloud and darkness are not known! Your generous deeds, brave woman, deserve a reward above the value of what we call wealth. The crown of leaves on the true hero's brow is nobler than the crown of diamonds

on the monarch's, for it is the badge of merit. Allow me, then, to place on your finger this ring, not for its value, but as a token of our everlasting gratitude. In the name of myself and these seven, as well as of the owner of the ship and its cargo, whose agent I am, I place the ring where it is, with the prayer that the choicest blessings of heaven may rest upon you and yours forever."

Kate was astounded. For a time she did nothing but look silently down at the glittering ornament that had been placed upon her finger. Though little she understood of what the captain had said, yet she knew full well that the action was prompted by feelings of gratitude for the part she had taken towards saving the ship. "I didn't count on bein' paid for what I done," she said, in a tone and with an expression of face that told that she was hesitating whether to permit the ring to remain.

"*Paid?*" said the captain; "the ship and its contents are not enough to pay you, brave woman!"

Kate glanced up into her husband's face. There were he and his rude companions, gazing silently at her; the light of pleasure was upon their faces, and they seemed to be waiting to hear what she would reply.

Stam understood well enough the question that was asked by that quick glance of his wife. "Let it be where he has put it, Kate," said the proud husband: "it'll mind you of the roughest v'yage you ever undertook. Let it be."

"It shall stay," she said, tremulously.

Stam and his wife and the three men then took their places in the gig, and it was lowered down from the davits into the sea and went plunging away landward.

Vigorous was the steady stroke of the oarsmen, and swiftly passed the boat away and away and away, now rising to the towering summits, now descending into deep valleys, and so ascending and descending until it had dwindled in the distance to a mere speck as seen from the ship's decks; then it passed from the view of those whose fervent prayers for its safety still followed it.

It was not long then before the yellow coast appeared over the little craft's bow, and glittered in the sunlight like a golden zone. Still on sped the faithful gig, now through the smothering surf, and now high up on North Banks reef.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE BABE WELCOMES ITS MOTHER.

THE winds had sunk to sleep, but mountain billows still were rolling in and thundering on the beach. Upon a foaming height, two hundred yards from shore, the graceful gig arose, and doubly quick the strokes were made to keep her there. Kate with the steering-oar, the rowers' heads and arms, and glimpses of oars, and bow, and gunwales, were dimly seen through clouds of spray, above the boiling crest, until at last that billow toppled on the shore: then through the roaring avalanche the daring rider plunged, then darted up the yellow slope. The oarsmen dropped their oars, and, leaping out, two on a side, they grasped the gunwales with strong hands to prevent their craft running back with the returning flood.

"Here we is, back on land ag'in!" said Len Curt; "there ain't no tellin' what can be did by standin' square up to a thing! It's about like Stam told you yisterday, cap'n; there's no use turnin' loose and sinkin' even if you should git swamped, for it's only them that holds on that comes out all right. It's best to hang on!"

"Brave people," said Pierre, "you have taught me a valuable lesson, one that I can never forget. You have overcome difficulties that appeared to be insurmountable, and have performed the noble deeds of heroism that you started out to do. Henceforth I shall not cease to *hang on* while there remains even a straw to hang to; and I trust that I too may bravely and hopefully perform the work that I have in hand to do, however dark the present, and however drear and tempestuous the scenes before me through which I must pass."

"We'll all help you to look for them now."

"Maybe you'll find 'em yet."

"Maybe so," said Len; "but about that; anyways, we can do one thing I'll tell you I know the channel along

better give us your painter and be towed a spell; or, what's better'n that, you'd better git into our boat and go along with us."

"This is a kind of bizness, I should say, that had best be looked into a little before startin' out. Some things can be did quickest by workin' slow, and it's my belief this is one of 'em. You ain't a goin' to find smooth water all along, and I can tell you that now. It's well enough for you that Ike Drew ain't here; but then there's some left yet on North Banks that ain't so mighty much better than Ike Drew. You see we'll just look over the chart a spell and git the bearin's all fresh in mind; then, when we starts, we'll know better how to steer."

While this conversation was going on, the gig's crew were crossing the bare sands from the beach toward the path in the thicket. They had not gone more than half the distance before they were met by Betsy Curt, and Nancy, and Peggy, who had descended the hill and come on to meet the returned voyagers.

"Who is this you've brought?" asked Nancy Weathers, turning her fierce eyes upon Pierre as she spoke.

"Maybe if you'll look good you'll see that it's him that went off with us to the ship," said Len.

"And *maybe*," said Nancy, "he's come back to see how many fools he can git together to keep wrecks from comin' on when they're about as good as stranded. Pity Ike Drew was drowned and not some others."

"Pity some ain't in h——, where they ought to be," said Len, savagely.

"I guess if everybody was there as ought to be, you'd be missed about North Banks mighty soon," said Peggy Strubl in her manly voice. "It's like Nancy says: pretty folks you've got to fetchin' here! I wish Ike Drew had come back in that gig instid of comin' like he did. But maybe somebody *else* 'll be here yet."

"asked Stam, nervously. "Is anything gone mammy?"

"youngun," said Nancy. "I'm your house, Stam Weathers! to know. But I shouldn't to buryin' dead ones and

gittin' wrecks off to sea, had enough time to spare to bother about younguns. Go and see for yourself, but don't ask me about your whelp."

Stam stood silently looking upon his scowling mother. A terrible frown was upon his face. The good and evil in his heart were having a hard struggle for the mastery, with even chances of triumph; but Virtue came then and whispered of the good deed that he had so recently done, and the curse that quivered on his lips was not uttered.

At another time the result of such a conflict might have been different, but Stam had been more than ordinarily happy on that morning; there had been dwelling in his heart a joy that had never been there before,—the consciousness that he had acted the part of a true hero from pure, unselfish motives. In the short time that had elapsed since the landing of the gig he had mentally adopted a score of good resolutions, and laid hasty plans for future conduct far different from that of the past; but now, in an instant of time, all the good resolutions and all the plans of reform were about to be discarded as impracticable; for here was his mother, the first to meet him after his dangerous adventure, greeting him with taunts and bitter abuse,—aye, more, seeming glad for the opportunity of piercing his heart with poisoned stings, and goading her son to madness.

The wretched mother seemed to know of the conflict that was going on in her son's heart, and the scowl upon her face took the form of a contemptuous sneer. "No, don't ask me," she repeated, "but go and see for yourself; *maybe* your whelp ain't hurt."

Stam watched the sneer a time: a terrible suspicion came over his mind: had she taken advantage of his absence to gratify her dark revenge? Wild with sudden fear, he turned and fled homeward. But he had not gone far before Betsy Curt called to him, in a loud voice: "Wait, Stam, wait! don't be a fool! I've just come from there, and all's right."

"It's well it is all right," said Stam, as he came to a sudden halt, and then turned and came walking deliberately back, meeting the rest; "it's well all is right there."

"Why didn't you let the fool run hisself to death, Betsy Curt?" said Nancy, with a demoniac laugh: "there'd been one less of the fools that spends their time buryin' dead

ones and helpin' wessels to sea when they're just about beached."

Stam again stood face to face with his tormentor. The demon had taken his soul by storm. Passion darkened his face and glared out at his eyes, and his strong frame trembled like a leaf. "I don't want to kill you," he said, "but you've sot in to make me do it! Don't say no more! Nary word more!"

Then quivered the thin frame of the mother. Well she knew that those words were said in earnest, for the arm was raised, the angry eyes were upon her, watching to see if the quivering lips would speak. She turned and walked away in silence: yet, though she strode away, her eyes were on him still, for still the arm was raised, still glared on her the dreadful eyes, and still he stood in attitude for quick attack; the fiend that held the vantage-ground was waiting but to catch the sound of one defiant word before the onslaught, and grinning Death stood near the hag, expectant of the prey.

Still slowly on, with sullen step, the unnatural mother went, still gazing back with glittering eyes upon the rebel son, Death urging her to halt and speak, fear prompting her to fly; and, acted on by both, she neither stood nor fled. Again the angered son turned homeward.

Though Kate had all the time been standing by his side, she spoke not until now. "Oh, Stam," she said, as a happy smile lighted the face that had been pale and anxious, "I'm glad you stayed with me! Don't take on so no more, Stam; it skeers me when you looks so much like Ike. Don't take on so no more, Stam."

"No, Kate," said Stam, his frame still trembling as he spoke. "It's the last time. I shan't git mad at what she says no more,—never no more."

"It was Jim Beam that got hurt," said Betsy. "A gang that nobody knowed went to his house last night and beat him to a mammock, and then they burnt up his house. He's layin' in the path now, where they left him."

"Burnt his house?" said Len Curt, coolly; "that is a pity."

"Yonder comes Gilsey with the youngun," said Kate, as she ran forward to meet the child. Its little arms were reaching towards her long before she got to it, and it laughed for joy at beholding again its long-absent mother.

Kate had seated herself on the sand, and was holding the

child to her bosom, when Stam came up and stood before them. Then the last trace of anger vanished from his face, and in place of dark scowls was the light of joy.

"Has the youngun pestered you much, Gilsey?" asked Kate.

"No," she answered. "Him and me's had a good time."

"It's all gone right," said Stam. "Everything's gone right. Everything takes a turn that way sometimes."

"God never fails to bless those who do right," said Pierre, who had overheard what Stam had said.

"Seems as that's so," said Kate, as she arose and went on with the rest. "It does seem that them that does right feels best, and that, in the long run, things goes straighter with sich."

"How come it, Betsy," asked Stam, as the party entered the hut, "that Jim Beam got hurt last night, and his house burnt?"

"Well, this is the way Pete tells it," the woman answered. "A gang of drunken devils come ashore in a yawl, yisterday or last night, and it was did by them. Way in the night a mighty whoopin' and yellin' was heerd by Jim's folks, and Jim got it into his head right away that Ike Drew had fixed to wreck the ship, and had come to the beach bringin' enough of the crew to do the worst of the wreckin' the next day; so what does Jim do but set-to to callin' Ike as loud as ever he could. Ike didn't answer, but them that had been circlin' about through the woods yellin' and whoopin' did, and presently here they come bustin' into the house and turnin' everything upside down. Then Jim got his gun and shot at 'em, and then they sot fire to the house, and beat him like I told you. He's layin' in the path now, where they left him, for they beat him all to mash; he's orful mad, too,—cussin' and dammin' everything around, and one-half the time not knowin' what he's sayin' or doin'."

Pierre's eyes were fastened upon the woman during the whole time that she was speaking; his lips quivered, and his whole frame was convulsed. "Can you tell me," he asked, in a husky voice, "where those men now are, or the direction they took when they left, if they have gone?"

"*Can I tell!*" Betsy exclaimed. "No, I can't tell that, for I don't know; but I hope they are at the bottom of the

Sound, with fifteen foot of water rollin' over 'em ; and like as any way that's where they is, for it was blowin' a gale when they stole Jim's boat from the landin' and went off in her, and I should guess they was drunk enough to capsize her in short order. I don't know where they're at ; all I know is, Pete says they went off with the boat, and she nor them neither ain't been seed or heerd of since."

"Did you learn how many they were?" Pierre asked.

"A good, smart gang ; eight or ten, maybe, I should guess."

"Did you hear the name of their leader?"

"Pete says he was a Portegeee, and they called him Pedro."

"Merciful heaven !" gasped Pierre, and as he spoke his face became as pale as if every drop of blood had rushed from it into the agonized heart ; "Pedro?— Were there a mother and her children with them?"

"A mother and her children with them?" Betsy repeated, staring with a look of astonishment into the deadly pale face of the questioner as she spoke. "No, there warn't none o' them !"

Pierre took two or three tottering steps toward the door, and then his strength failed him, and he leaned heavily against the log wall of the hut. "Oh, God !" he exclaimed, in a faint voice ; "my precious Marie ! My little darlings ! Oh, my God !" He would have fallen to the floor, had not Stam rushed forward, and caught him in his strong embrace, and assisted him to a seat upon the chest.

"Here, Gilsey," said Kate, "hold the youngun till I can bring some water for him !"

Gilsey took the child, and the frightened woman hurried out of the hut and away to the spring. She soon returned, bringing a conch full of the clear, cool water, which she held to the sufferer's lips. "Drink some of this," she said ; "it'll make you feel better."

"Maybe he's lost some o' his folks !" said Betsy Curt, in an undertone, to her husband.

"That's what's the matter," Len answered. "And like as not, them that beat Jim, and burnt his house, and stole his boat, was the devils that brung his folks off from the ship."

"Like as not," said Betsy. "And I shouldn't wonder if I sees into it now ; for Pete says the first thing they did, when they busted into the house, was to upset everything,

lookin', as they said, for a woman and some younguns that had got away from 'em."

"Got away from them!" gasped Pierre. "Oh, thank God!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

A SECRET ESCAPES FROM ITS PRISON.

"WHAT'S the matter with Pete Beam?" said Gilsey, rising nervously from her seat in the doorway as she spoke, and gazing up the path. "Here he comes, scuddin' a ten-knot lick; like as anyway them that beat Jim has come back and is after him!"

Stam hurried to the door, and looked out. "Somethin's wrong, sure 'nough!" he said, as he reached up and took his gun from its rack over the door, and made a hasty inspection of it, "for Pete's comin' like as if somethin' ugly was reachin' after him. I guess it wouldn't be nothin' amiss to see that the flint is all right and the primin' dry, for it wouldn't be no time for snappin' and flashin' if it should turn out to be them. They can come if they're a mind to, but I shouldn't wonder if some of 'em don't stay here after the frolic's over!"

Kate grasped her husband's arm. "Don't shoot!" she said. "Maybe they won't try to pester nobody when they sees so many of us. Don't shoot, Stam!"

"No, no," said Pierre, rising from the chest, "don't shoot! The life of a human being should never be taken, except in case of extreme necessity. It is a terrible thing to shed the blood of a fellow-creature!"

"That may all be so," said Len Curt, coolly, as he drew his knife from his belt, and whetted it on the dirt-lining of the chimney; "but then it won't hurt to be ready in case they should come. Nothin' onproper in bein' ready, you know, cap'n."

Pete came up to the door. "Go over yonder some of you, and do for daddy!" he said. "There's no use talkin' about it, he's a gone schooner if he don't git some help, and that

soon! He's been playin' off and on as long as he could. But she's in the surf now,—bilin' through it under nothin' but a flyin'-jib; and you know she ain't a goin' to steer at that chance! I tell you if somebody ain't there to help soon, she'll beach in spite o' h——! Come, come, if you're comin'!"

Stam reached quietly up, and put his gun into the rack again. Len returned his knife to its scabbard. But not a word of answer was returned to the boy's passionate appeal.

"What does he mean?" asked Pierre, surprised at the silence. "Is there a wreck coming in?"

"I guess you *mought* call it a wreck," said Len, as he drew his half-filled pipe from his pocket, and raked it in the hot ashes; "but she may beach and welcome, for what I cares. She's a rotten craft, and the sooner she busts up the better."

"I cannot understand you," said Pierre. "A wreck?"

"Jim Beam's about to kick out and go," said Len, with a chuckle.

"Kick out?—and go? Go where?"

"Why, kick out o' rig—and go to h——, in course! I shouldn't guess that Jim Beam had anywheres else to go after kickin' out. Jim Beam?—he'll git the *Devil* foul if the old feller don't watch!"

"Surely, my friends," said Pierre, "you will not hesitate to render any assistance in your power to a dying man?"

"Jim Beam?—if he never gits any help till I goes, he'll lay where he is the rest of his life," said Len. "He's one, cap'n, that ought to have been dead twenty year ago, by good rights. No; I hope his time *has* come."

"But he is a human being," said Pierre, "and our duty is to relieve a brother who has fallen, or is in distress, whoever he may be, or however low and degraded his position."

"Jim Beam?—he ain't no brother o' mine!" said Len; "but, then, if he was, it would be all the same. Jim Beam!"

"But," said Pierre, "if we have not mercy for others, how can we expect mercy? Think of it; is it not a good rule that we do to others as we would have them do to us?"

"That's good enough," said Len, "and I'll toe that mark with Jim, any time; for, if I was in his fix, and he in mine, I shouldn't want him comin' round me; and, you see, I ain't goin' round him: that's square enough, ain't it?"

"But God requires that we should be kind and brotherly toward one another," said Pierre.

"And does he want me to do anything to'ards helpin' to keep breath in sich a devil as Jim Beam, when I knows well enough, all the time, that the longer he lives the worse it will be for me and everybody else around? Jim Beam!"

"It is not for *us* to judge too harshly," said Pierre. "We did not give the man life, and it is not for us to say how long he shall live. He that gave his life can take it when he wills; and God is judge of his creatures' acts. Now we all do wrong in one way or another, and none can rely on his own good deeds to bring the blessings of a pleasurable life. I take it that all mankind are journeying on together in the hope of reaching a better land. Parts of the way are rugged and dark, but we must pass on, or there is no hope. Now, is it a duty, think you, to assist a weak and weary companion along? or shall he be left to perish on the dark plain upon which he has fallen? If *we* are in the right path, ought we to try to keep the brother, who is disposed to wander off, near us? or shall he be permitted to go on, without a kind word of warning, until he falls from the precipice that is hid from *his* eyes, but which may be seen by us? Reason alone will teach us our duty in these respects; and I fear much that he who fails to be kind and merciful to his companions on the journey of life will fail to reach the better land, for how can he expect mercy who has not been merciful?"

"We'd better go," said Kate; "then maybe God will show us how to find the cap'n's folks." And saying this, she turned and went out of the door, without waiting to see whether her suggestion had been received favorably or not.

"Say, Kate," said Stam, "where is you off to?"

"I'm goin' to see Jim," she said; "maybe he wants water or somethin' to eat. Can't we fix to fetch him here, Stam, and lay him on the floor? It's bad he should have to lay there out in the elements, in his fix."

"Fetch Jim Beam here? Wait, I'll go along with you."

"Come, Betsey," said Len, as Stam and his wife and Pierre went out of the door, "I guess it won't hurt for us to go along, too. Kate's got a level head, and maybe it's like she says about findin' the cap'n's folks. Anyways, it won't hurt to go along with the rest, and look at the devil."

Pete led the way along at a quick pace, followed closely by the late occupants of the hut, including bare-legged, tangled-haired Gilsey, who brought up the rear, lugging the baby. Poor Gilsey Roe! how she hoped that they would not bring Jim Beam there and lay him on the floor; for, if they should do so, she doubted not but that he would kill the kind stranger or steal the little baby away. Oh, she hoped they would not bring Jim Beam there!

"How is your father injured?" asked Pierre of the lad as they went along.

Pete turned his head and stared for some moments with a puzzled expression at the question. "How is what?"

"How is your father hurt?"

"My *what*?"

"Your father!"

"Ain't got no sich!" said Pete. "Oh! if it's daddy you're talkin' about, he's hurt all over, beat all to mash; ain't got a whole bone left in his body as I knows on."

"Bruised, no doubt, badly," said Pierre. "Did he receive any other injury?"

"Any other *what*?"

"Did he get hurt in any other way than——"

"Any *other* way, eh? Warn't them enough ways? The house was burnt and all that was in it, the boat stole, and every bone in his body mashed to splinters! I should think that was enough ways to git hurt *for one time*; if there's any more to come it ought to be saved for next time, seems to me!"

"Why didn't he git out o' the way?" asked Kate.

"It's easy enough to *talk* about gittin' out o' the way," said Pete, "but it ain't so easy to *do*, with sich a gang as that was, and they all a'hold o' you at onest: he did git away, like I did; but then he took a notion to creep back and shoot, and then's when they got him."

"Didn't he kill nobody when he shot?" asked Sol.

"*Kill*?—when there warn't nary shot in the gun! Mammy never lets shot stay in the gun while she's up there in the rack; if she was to she'd a'been killed twenty times afore now, when she and daddy gits to fightin'. He knows she's as good as he is on her manhood, so the first thing he does when they gits into a fuss is to reach up for the gun and shoot.

No, there warn't nary shot in her; but he hadn't thought about that."

"Ain't Peggy nussed Jim none since he was beat?" asked Kate.

"Nussed the devil! Now, Kate, you know better'n that!"

"Is your father unconscious?" asked Pierre.

"I don't know about that," Pete answered; "but the blue devils had got him and was bouncin' him high when I come off! Once in awhile he'd manage to roll sorter over, but every time he done it his legs and arms would wind and twist and double round him, same as if there warn't a bone in 'em half-inch long; the blood would come oozin' and spurtin' out o' his mouth and nose and runnin' over his face and neck, and then the dirt and ashes, mixin' up with the blood, got him to lookin' as ugly as the devil hisself. But yonder he lays; you can see for yourself."

Jim was lying upon his back, near the ruins of the hut, his face toward the approaching party, suffering the most intense agony, and cursing and yelling with every breath.

No soul had been near him since he had received his injuries except his son, and he had done nothing but to sit near by and receive in silence the awful curses of the wretched father.

Horrible, indeed, was the sight. Fresh streams of blood were still at times trickling from his mouth and nose, and the sand near his head was deeply dyed with the crimson stream that had been flowing for hours. There were but shreds and tatters of clothing upon his breast and arms as far down as his savage teeth had been able to reach. His blood-begrimed face was drawn and furrowed by the dreadful pains that he was suffering, and his eyes were as wild and bright as those of the wounded tiger, and fiercely they were fixed upon those who were drawing near. From the instant they came in his sight nothing was heard but his shocking blasphemy and the fearful curses that he hurled upon them, at times by their names, then as a whole company.

"Poor creature," said Pierre; "how dreadful must be his agonies!"

"Hush your cussin' me, you black devil!" said Len Curt, as he drew near the frenzied man. "Hush, or I'll take a stick and beat your brains out!"

Pierre looked at Len in amazement. "Surely, friend," he

said, "surely you would not resent anything that might be said by a man in the condition of this one! He is in no manner responsible for anything that he may say; but, if he were in his perfect senses, his prostrate and helpless condition ought to protect him against violence at the hands of any rational creature!"

"No," said Stam; "let him cuss his belly full: he won't be here to pester anybody much longer."

The dying man, before these words were said, seemed not to have been aware of the presence of Stam, who, with Kate, was standing near his head; but, recognizing his voice, he turned upward his face and, rolling back his blazing eyes upon him, said: "Go off, Stam Weathers: go off! go off!—you and Kate too,—go off from me! I don't want nary one of you nigh me. Haw, haw! You've found it out, and now you've come to kill me; but I ain't afeerd of you! Yes, I killed 'em; I'm the one; I'm the very one! You devil! I ain't forgot *you*! I'm the one that killed 'em, Stam Weathers. *Jim Beam done it!* and that ain't all neither. Ain't—I—got—my—eye—on—that—other—one? Ha! I should a had him last night if them devils had put off comin' this way one hour longer! Gilsey wouldn't never knowed who got him, dark as it was! *Another dark night's comin', Stam!* How straight you're lookin' at me, Stam!—straight down into my eyes! Well, look! look! look! Maybe you can see through—way down into my heart! But look! See if I winks once when you're findin' out what's in it! Ha, Stam Weathers, it was *me* that killed 'em!"

"Killed who?" asked Stam, of the writhing man.

"Killed who?—No, I didn't kill 'em. Did I say *kill*? Well, it's the same thing. Killed who? Stam, you mought a kept on lookin' till now, and Kate mought a kept on cryin' till now! You're both fools! I took 'em away from North Banks, Stam, and you wouldn't found 'em till now. The wind was as fair that night as it could blow,—east-no'theast,—and didn't it blow! and warn't—it—dark! Christ! warn't it dark when I turned the skiff loose, with them in it, to drift up the river! Then I beat clear back from that river that night,—hard as it blowed, and dark as it was. Next morning my boat was at the landing, and you never knowed I went. The skiff and them that was in it ain't never been heard of

yet! I don't know where they is! Did the devils that was here last night kill Nancy Weathers? *Maybe she knowed about me goin' off that night?* The devils come too soon last night, Stam: the mast and the rudder and the oars and the sand-bags was in the boat,—nothin' to do but step in and let her go. Me and the crew had just got out of the door,—we had just started,—when the yellin' was heerd! But it'll soon—soon be dark nights agin, Stam!"

Stam's eyes met those of his wife. A dark angel had burst from its gloomy prison,—the wretched murderer's heart. The secret was told!

"Oh, Stam," moaned Kate, "it was him that killed our babies!"

Stam made no reply. For a time he stood, staring vacantly into his wife's face. It seemed that reason had flown, or that Death was fanning his heart with his icy wing: scarcely he breathed. Then his brow grew darker, and darker, and darker, and his eyes more and more fierce and terrible; still, he spoke not,—stirred not,—turned not away his face from hers. All were still; even Jim had ceased to rave.

Still, all remained silent as he turned and walked towards the thicket, all eyes followed him,—all, even those glittering ones of the wretched criminal. He disappeared in the thick cluster, but soon returned, bringing a green bough that he had cut from one of the stunted oaks, and resumed his position at the prostrate man's head. There he stood and trimmed the bough of its twigs, then cut from it a club of the desired length. During this whole time his acts were calm and deliberate: not a nerve in his whole body twittered, nor was that dreadful calm disturbed even when with both hands he raised the heavy club above his head and aimed the deadly blow. The blow fell not. Slowly his hands descended: one end of the club was brought to the ground, his right hand rested on the other. Calmly he stood and looked upon the horribly convulsed and battered body stretched out before him, and waited for the fit to pass off, and for the white eyes to roll back to their places and glitter again with their demon fires. Not a word had yet been spoken!

Kate still was standing near her husband's side. Well knew she what his silent movements meant. Not even for an instant were her pleading eyes turned from the dark face. She hoped

that he might see her yet, and answer favorably the silent plea,—the plea that even *she* dared not speak, for fear the dreadful stroke would fall and be her only answer. Pete sat there, near his father, in the sand. Terror was on his face, but why should *he* plead? Gilsey had learned the meaning of the awful pantomime. She had never seen the murderer's stroke descend,—she could not! Tremblingly she turned away homeward. Pierre made one soft step forward, and quietly he took the sleeping infant from the mother's yielding arms and held it so the father might see it, if for an instant he should take his steady gaze from the agonized face near his feet. Len and his wife stood somewhat in the rear; now they were leaning forward, and looking anxiously into the dismal face. Her pale face still upturned, gradually, and with an almost imperceptible movement, the frightened wife sank lower, and lower, and lower, until she rested on her knees; then reaching out her hands, she placed them softly on that hand that rested on the club. The husband trembled at the touch, and looked upon his kneeling wife, and started slightly, as if awaking suddenly from a dream. What deep distress was in that pale, cold face before him, and how the quivering eyes were pleading!

"Yes, Kate," he said, as if but one thought could now find place, "he killed 'em!"

Kate spoke one word,—a trembling whisper,—"*Stam!*"

"*He* killed 'em, Kate! He killed our pretty babies!"

"*Stam*, it was long ago!"

"Yes, yes, he killed 'em, Kate!"

Softly again Pierre stepped forward; quietly he placed the little sleeper on its father's arm, that arm that had been resting on his breast; it lay upon his bosom, its little peaceful face hiding the one beneath. The father's eyes turned not upon it, and yet he pressed it gently to his bosom, though seemingly unconscious of its presence.

"*Stam!*" Kate said, "oh, *Stam*, don't kill him! God knowed it all the time; and He ain't killed him. He knows what's best, better than what we does. Don't kill him!"

The babe awoke, and, as it looked up into its father's face, it laughed merrily.

"Oh, listen, *Stam*," said Kate; "*he's* talkin', too!"

Stam pressed the infant closer to his heart. "It ain't for

me to do it, Kate," he said. "God *does* know best ; seems as if it was Him that saved *this one* last night when we was both gone from it. Here, fling this stick away ; I'm done with it. He *does* know best."

Jim's convulsions had passed off, and his eyes turned glaring brightly up again. "Yes," he said, with an awful oath, "it was *me* that done it, Stam. Ha ! what a chance I've lost by them devils comin' here last night ! How dark it was,—how dark, dark—dark !"

A deep sigh followed the last word. Again his eyes rolled and seemed almost bursting from their sockets ; again the battered limbs trembled to their very extremities.

Gradually the muscles of the dying man lost their rigidity ; gradually the spasmed face grew smoother and calmer ; a tremor passed through his frame ; again he sighed, and then lay motionless. The spirit had flown.

CHAPTER XIX.

LOST IN THE WILDERNESS.

"AND didn't you jump out of the boat, Jeannot, when the bear jumped in ?" asked Paul, when the newly-arrived explorer had got to that part of his narrative where Bruin came cantering across the lawn and leaped into the boat with him.

"*Certainly* not," said Jeannot ; "that is, Paul, I didn't *quite* jump out ; but I don't know what I might have done if the old man had waited half a minute longer before ordering his pet away."

"I think *I* should have pushed the boat more than *a few feet* out into the lake, if I had been in your place, and seen the savage brute sitting on his haunches there on the green looking at me, and every now and then showing his two great rows of grinning teeth—ugh !"

"Didn't you see Fawn at all, after she ran away so fast ?" asked Lucie. "I suppose she wore her dress of speckled fawn-skins still ? Could you tell the color of her eyes and hair, Jeannot ?"

"Yes," said Jeannot, in answer to only the last question. "I had an opportunity of seeing them well this time: her eyes are of the softest hazel, fringed with long lashes, and her hair is as dark as the wing of a raven."

"Didn't Timon look *at all* frightened as he stood there on the slope with a bear on each side of him and his hands resting on their heads?" asked Paul.

"Timon was at some distance from me, Master Paul, and I cannot say precisely how he did look; but I think if he were frightened at all, it was at sight of *me*, for both he and his bears stood and gazed as long as I remained there to be seen: they scarcely took their eyes from me a moment, nor did they change their position during the time, except that the bears would sometimes squat on their haunches and prick up their ears even higher than before. They all seemed to be in a great wonderment at what they saw, and curious to know what I and my boat were doing there on the lake."

"I have thought that bears were worse than they really are," said Paul, after a long breath: "I am sure I shall not have so great dread of them hereafter. When the skin that you have tacked to your shelter gets dry enough, François, I will be glad if you will bring it into the tent and let me sleep under it, for I have no doubt it will prove to be a very comfortable blanket after all."

"Did the old man tell you nothing of his history?" asked François.

"I asked him nothing about it," said Jeannot, "as great as was my desire to know, for I well knew that if I should begin the inquiry I would have to hear the whole story; so I concluded that it would be better for me to return to camp and inform you of my discoveries, and let the story wait until we could all hear it at once, and I informed the old man that we would all see him very soon."

"It is a most remarkable case," said Marie; "and I must confess I have great curiosity to know more of it."

"Let us all go and see them to-morrow, mamma," said Lucie; "we could start from here early enough to get back before night. Oh, I do wish to see Fawn so much!"

"Yes," said Paul, looking up into the trees, and apparently absorbed in deep thought upon the subject; "let us start soon to-morrow morning. There will not be the least danger about

it, mamma; for you know as soon as our boat shoots out from the creek into the little lake, we can take in oars and call loudly until some one shall hear us and come down to the water's edge to learn who we are: then, as soon as the old man or any one else shall make their appearance, we will tell them that we have come to pay them a visit, and that we would be glad if they would tie up the bears securely before we land; for you know, mamma, there are so many of us that we might frighten poor Timon's pets back into the wilderness, and so he would lose them. We had better start *very* early."

"I am not so sure," said Jeannot, "whether the visitors would not be as apt to retreat back into the wilderness as the bears. Suppose, Master Paul, that while we should be calling, as you suggest, *the bears*, instead of persons, should come down to the water's edge to inquire what was wanted? Now think; suppose, after the first good, hearty call, we should see coming cantering across the green, toward us, two great black bears, who, instead of halting at the water's edge, should plunge into the lake and swim rapidly out to our boat. How would you feel then, Master Paul?"

"I should think," said Paul, "that it would be a very silly caper in the bears to do such a thing; for surely they could not climb out of the water into the boat, could they, Jeannot?"

"I cannot say about that," Jeannot answered; "don't you recollect what François told us about the nimbleness of the bear, clumsy as he appears to be? In such a case we would have to take our chances, of course."

"I am not afraid of bears now, as I was before I heard of Timon's placing his hands on the heads of his tame ones," said Paul, thoughtfully. "Still, as I am not acquainted with Timon's bears, nor they with me, I don't think it would be altogether prudent for us to do as I suggested; for I should be sorry all the days of my life if one of them should happen to swim out and clamber up into the boat and get the baby!"

Every one present laughed heartily at the boy's serious manner of treating the subject, and at his wise forethought on the baby's account.

"Le's all go *now*," said Murat. "Jeannot knows how to keep the bears away from us."

"Little Bobkins," said Paul, "you must be patient, and wait for others to act; little fellows like you are don't know what is best. No doubt we will all go in good time."

"Don't let Grill get me, buddy, when we go. You'll have a big stick along and keep him away, won't you?"

"Don't be afraid of Grill, or the other bear either, the least bit," said Paul, as he put his arms around his little brother's neck and kissed him affectionately. "Nothing in the world shall hurt you, for I will be on the lookout all the time. It will be about this way when we land on the island: the old man and Timon will be between the bears and us; next to these will come François and Jeannot; then will come me, holding your hand and carrying a big stick; behind all the rest will be mamma, with Adele and Lucie. Fawn will be walking between the bears, holding them by the ears. Don't you see how safe we shall be? But besides that, I shall be all the time peeping around toward the bears until we get into the house. You mustn't cry, then, nor be afraid in the least, even if the bears should be loose when we get there; for they shall not hurt you, dear little Bobkins."

Murat showed plainly that he was entirely satisfied with the arrangement; but, in spite of himself, the valiant brother could not help shuddering at times while he was speaking.

"You might have told your little brother too," said François, "that the morning is too far spent to think of starting *now*, and besides that, we shall have to prepare before we leave here; provisions would have to be cooked to be carried with us, for it is highly probable that it would be inconvenient for the old man to furnish more than enough for himself and his two children and the two bears. But, be that as it may, it is well to have forethought, and to prepare for emergencies. Again, we should have to do something for the protection of the camp in our absence, by setting traps and snares, for otherwise we could expect nothing better than that wild animals would come and carry off and destroy our precious things. I should say we had better not think of going until day after to-morrow. But hark! were not those sounds the notes of a bugle in the distance? Hark, again!"

"They are, without doubt, bugle-notes," said Jeannot, in great amazement. "They come from the direction of the little lake: the old man, it may be, is sounding for the amuse-

ment of his children ; but could the notes of a bugle be heard so far through the wilderness ?”

“ It may be in the *direction* of the lake, and yet this side of it,” said François. “ The old man may be out on the hunt, or, possibly, he is calling his children to him.”

“ Or it may be,” said Lucie, “ that they are all standing on the lake-shore, listening to the sweet echoes of bugle-notes. Listen again !”

“ I think they are approaching towards us,” said François, “ for the sounds are becoming more and more distinct.”

“ Oh,” said Lucie, “ suppose the old man, and Fawn, and Timon are on their way through the wilderness to see us !”

“ It is not probable,” said François, “ that they would come so far through the thick woods. But surely some one is approaching, for hear the sounds again.”

“ It is Fawn ! it is Fawn !” said Lucie, as she bounded away in the direction from whence the sounds came.

And so excited was the child, that she had got into the thick forest some distance from the camp before she began to think seriously of what she was doing, and it was only when she heard again the bugle-notes (now near to her) that she was brought to consider. Then she halted abruptly and looked around her : there was nothing to be seen in any direction but the wild woods, and she became greatly alarmed, for she knew not what course to take to reach the camp ; and oh, suppose it should be Pedro and his band, and not the old man and Fawn and Timon !

For a time she wandered along in great distress, moaning sadly as she went, and becoming more and more frightened at each step she took ; then she seated herself on the root of a tree, and burying her face in her hands, she hung her head and moaned and wept as if her heart would break.

Lucie had been sitting there on the root grieving but a short time when she was startled at hearing the bugle-notes again, now so near that they rang and reverberated through the wilderness with a strange and melodious sweetness. Quickly she raised her head and dropped her hands from her face. Instantly then she sprang to her feet, gazing in amazement, as she did so, through the tears that had welled to her eyes. A beautiful little maiden stood before her, looking with wondering, smiling face upon the sad mourner. Neither, for a time,

spoke, but each stood mutely gazing at the other,—Lucie, with hands still upraised before her, as when she started from her seat; Fawn holding her right hand before the mistletoe wreath on her forehead, shielding from her eyes the sun-ray that came glinting through the overhanging boughs. In her left hand the little stranger held a bow and three or four arrows. So noiseless had been her approach that Lucie knew naught of her presence until the bugle-notes came and scared away her sighs.

“Oh, pretty one!” said Fawn (for she it was), “*what are you?* I have been standing here watching as you wept, listening to the sad sob and sigh. What has caused you sorrow? and why do you moan so piteously? Will you not cease to grieve? Will you not smile with me, pretty fay? Will you not love Fawn, who has never before seen aught so beautiful?”

“Oh, Fawn! dear, beautiful Fawn!” said Lucie, advancing and throwing her arms around the little maiden’s neck, and kissing her nut-brown cheeks again and again. “Oh, is it indeed my beautiful, beautiful Fawn? My Fawn who sang so sweetly to Echo?”

“Are you the spirit?” asked Fawn, innocently. “Basil thinks you have not form. Has sweet Echo indeed come to rest in my bosom? Dear sister!”

The old man and Timon had come quietly up, unperceived by either Lucie or Fawn, and were now standing at a little distance from them, half concealed by the trees,—a happy smile upon the face of one, the other crouching, half frightened; peeping coyly; watching with wondering eyes.

The old man had a quiver of arrows at his side, and in his hand a long, tapering bugle, that he had shaped out of the soft juniper-wood. The boy was carrying by its hind legs a dead hare, whose great wild eyes were still wide open, and whose long, pointed ears were set back as stiffly as when life had its dwelling in the body.

“See, see, Basil,” said Fawn; “I have found Echo!”

“Precious children!” said old Basil.

At the sound of that voice, Lucie suddenly raised her head from Fawn’s neck, where it had been resting, and stared in mute affright.

“Have no fear, dear sister,” said Fawn; “it is Basil. He

is so good and kind that you will love him as I and Timon do. There, there, pretty one; let not your heart throb so. Basil is very, very good; and he will love you as I do."

"Is it Echo?" asked Timon, in a tremulous whisper, as he looked up into the old man's face.

"No, child; this is one of the many thousands who dwell in the world around us, of whom I have so often told you."

"I have never seen one before," he said, in the same whispered voice. "Is it a spirit?"

"No; she is a being like you and Fawn."

"What a beautiful place the world around us must be," he said, "if the many thousands are like she is! Shall we see more of them?"

"Aye, Timon. I hear others *now* approaching us."

"Others?" asked Fawn.

"Aye."

"Dear, dear Basil! And was it to see this pretty one that you have brought us so far away from home to-day?"

"Yes, child. To see this one and others like her."

"Others like her? Oh, Basil, let us remain with them!"

"And leave the pretty cranes forever, Fawn?"

"Yes, Basil; leave them forever, to be with such as this. *They* will not want when left alone, for God will feed them."

"Still," said old Basil, "others are drawing near. Be not afraid, my children, when you shall see them; they will not harm you. See, one approaches! It is the same we saw on yesterday. There comes another. And there is a boy, like yourself, Timon."

"What are they?" asked Fawn. "I fear them, Basil!"

"Oh, fear them not, dear Fawn!" said Lucie. "They are François and Jeannot and Paul. They will dearly love you, my beautiful Fawn!"

"Is that Timon, Jeannot?" asked Paul, in a whisper.

"Yes; it is the boy whose hands were resting on the bears' heads."

"We greet you kindly, friends," said old Basil.

"He is not so very much bigger than I am," said Paul, as he advanced toward the boy. "Timon," he continued, "I am Paul. Jeannot has told me of you, and Grill and the other bear. You didn't bring your bears along with you, did you?"

"No," the shy boy modestly answered, as he moved farther behind old Basil.

"I am very glad you didn't bring them," said Paul, following the boy up, and taking a stand much nearer to him than before, "very glad; for François has baited hereabout a great number of log-traps; and it would be a pity if Grill and the other one should get caught in them. I am not afraid of bears as I used to be, Timon; but when we go to see you (which will be on the day after to-morrow) I think you had better tie yours up securely, for there are so many of us that they might take fright and run away into the wilderness and be lost."

Timon, who continued very close to old Basil, made no reply, but only glanced shyly from one to another of the strange people.

"Fawn," said Paul, turning abruptly toward the half-frightened girl, "I think you are very beautiful,—indeed, I do; you sing sweetly, too. We heard your song the other night. Before that, we had no idea that the name of the grand lake was Picture River. We will all be very happy, Fawn, if you and Timon and the old man will remain with us at the camp. We have a nice tent that François and Jeannot made. Will you not stay? I will teach you to catch pickerel, Timon."

Fawn replied not, for she was confused and frightened.

Then Paul, who was very persistent, turned toward old Basil, as the last resort: "I suppose," he said, "that you have lived upon your island of beeches a very long time?"

"Yes, my little master," said the old man, "many years."

"And, no doubt, are well acquainted with all the creeks and lakes in this region?"

"Aye, well acquainted."

"And probably have given pretty names to them all?"

"There is not a notable spot for miles around that we have not named," said old Basil. "This place upon which you have your camp is Pine Island."

"But this is not an *island*," said Paul; "an island has water all around it, and this has not."

"Very true," said the old man, smiling; "but we call such places as this islands, because they are highlands surrounded by lowlands. There are many such places near, which we have named from the principal growth upon them, Pine Island, Poplar Ridge, Hickory Ridge, etc. The island upon which we have a dwelling we call Beech Island. You will

observe, when you see all these places, that the growth upon them is in strange contrast with that upon the surrounding lowlands. Here, as you know, the land is covered with lofty pines; the growth upon our island is beech; at other places, it is poplar, hickory, oak, etc.; while the far-reaching wilderness in every direction is covered with gum, cypress, juniper, bay, laurel, etc. But this is a strange region in other respects, and the wild scenes here and there are beautiful."

"What names have you given to the creeks and lakes?" asked Paul.

"The little creeklet that runs on by your camp to Picture River is called by us 'the Arcade,' from the dense arch formed by the green juniper boughs above it. But to that part of the creeklet that extends on, above your camp and Pine Island, we have given another name."

"I did not know that the creeklet extended more than a few rods above our camp," said Paul, in some surprise.

"Then you have been much mistaken," said old Basil. "Half a mile above this place, the creeklet widens out into a lake almost as broad as Picture River; and this lake is deep enough to float great ships. We call it Juniper Lake."

"Like Master Paul, I am much surprised to hear of the existence of such a lake above us," said François. "The creeklet dwindles to such a puny rill above the camp that, as Master Paul says, we had no idea of its reaching more than a few rods farther."

"I suppose it is a very pretty place in there?" said Paul.

"As wild and beautiful as my eyes ever beheld," said old Basil. "I cannot conceive of a more lovely place than Juniper River."

"I desire much to visit it," said Paul. "What is the name of the lake above Picture River, in which is Beech Island?"

"We call it Wild Lake," old Basil answered; "and there is another still above that, which we call 'The Solitude.' Everlasting calm reigns there, for the lake is so diminutive and the growth of moss-covered cypresses around it so dense that scarcely the winds of the tempest can reach it. And so you see, my little master, that, hermits as we are, we have somewhat of a romantic turn."

"It is all very pretty," said Paul; "and I have no doubt

that you, and Fawn, and Timon, and Grill and the other bear, and Gracie and the other cranes, lead a very peaceful life at Wild Lake."

"Yes," said the old man, "our life has been quiet and peaceful."

By this time the company had reached the camp, where they found Marie standing in the tent-door anxiously waiting to hear from Lucie.

"Mamma," said Lucie, as she placed her arm affectionately around the little stranger maiden's waist, "this is Fawn. And he that is standing between Paul and the old man is Timon."

"My dear children," said Marie, "I am truly glad to see you."

"This is Basil," said Jeannot, introducing the old man.

"We offer you all a kind welcome," said Marie. "I have heard of you and your sweet children before, sir. May I ask whether you really have your residence in this lonely wilderness? Surely it cannot be your abiding-place?"

"We dwell here," said old Basil. "With the exception of these two children, I had not seen, before you came, a single human face during twenty-nine years past."

"Twenty-nine years!" Paul exclaimed. "How came Fawn and Timon to be with you?"

"Dear little boy!" said old Basil, "you have asked a question that neither Fawn nor Timon have ever thought to ask. I will answer it, but not now, for the answer will be a long one."

"I fear, Paul," said Marie, "that you will be thought to be a very rude and impertinent boy for asking so many questions."

"If it is wrong, mamma," said Paul, "I will ask no more; but I desire so much to know all about the old man and Timon and Fawn."

"The questions," said old Basil, smiling, "are very natural ones to be asked in such a case; nor would it be surprising, lady, if those who are not children should desire to be informed of matters so much out of the usual course of things. So far, then, from considering the little fellow's questions rude or impertinent, I will say that it will afford me great pleasure to answer them, and, at a more convenient time, to make a full relation

of the remarkable events of my life, and how it happened that Fawn and Timon came to be with me."

"I shall be so glad to hear it!" said Lucie.

"I think, Timon," said Paul, "that you and I had better sit close together on this *settee* when the story is being told."

"You will not hear it to-day, my little man," said old Basil; "for the sun is descending low in the western sky, and our dwelling-place is several miles away. We must retrace our steps before the evening shades shall come to gloam too deeply in the forest."

But both Paul and Lucie protested against the old man leaving; and, as neither Fawn nor Timon seemed averse to staying at Pine Island that night, old Basil consented to remain.

"We shall have many things to talk about to-night, Timon," said Paul. "We can lie awake, and I can tell you all about our shipwreck, and about how Jeannot and I catch pickerel in the Arcade. Lucie will have plenty to tell Fawn, too, about making wreaths of leaves; and I have no doubt François will have plenty to tell the old man about his log-traps."

Though Fawn and Timon were still very shy, yet it was plain to see that they felt great interest in all that they heard from the strange people, and in all they saw around them.

CHAPTER XX.

PRECIOUS WAIFS.

FRANÇOIS and Jeannot (who, like all the rest of those at the camp, were exceedingly anxious to hear old Basil's story) arose early on the next morning, and busied themselves in arranging some rude seats near the bank of the creeklet, at the boat-landing, for the old man and his audience to sit upon while he should be telling the tale.

The spot selected for them was a very pretty one. It was immediately beneath a cluster of three giant cypresses, whose long mossy arms reached, on one side, over the plat of green sward in the direction of the tent, and on the other over the water, and cast deep shadows over sward and water, and over

the little boat that lay sleeping at her moorings, and on the vine-tangled clusters at the opposite shore.

This work completed, the simple breakfast was prepared and eaten, and then the whole party went down to the landing and occupied the seats that had been prepared, except that old Basil preferred to sit upon the green grass near the root of one of the trees, and lean his back against its great trunk.

While all were silently waiting, old Basil sat for some moments looking into the water, apparently buried in deep meditation; but at last he looked up and began to relate the story.

"Twenty-nine years ago I was cast upon Body's Island beach from a wrecked ship that was on her voyage from America to a European port. Besides the officers and crew, there were eighteen persons on board, including myself. The ship had not been at sea many days before she was beset by storms and driven here and there until at last she was cast upon the reef a total wreck. Never before that time had I witnessed such scenes of horror and distress. Of all those on board, only two reached the inhospitable shores alive. Of these I was one, and a dear little baby girl the other. More than half the crew and all the officers had been washed from the decks before the ship got into the *breakers*; and when she came rolling and plunging landward over the outer reef,—sometimes bows under, sometimes stern under, and sometimes on her beams' ends,—the rest of the crew were swept off, and none remained on the ship but the agonized passengers who were locked in the cabin.

"As soon as the wreck had crossed the reef into the slough, where the waters were deeper and comparatively smoother, the passengers burst open the doors and rushed out on deck; and the majority of them, excited to madness, forthwith leaped from the decks into the sea and were drowned. These had glanced shoreward before leaping, and vainly hoped that they would be saved. Only six remained, and these were clinging to whatever they could clutch.

"A man and his wife were standing very near to me: she held to a cleat, and at the same time kept her babe above the rushing waters as well as she could; his left hand clutched a ring in the stanchions, and with his right he was sustaining his wife with a giant's strength. They were conversing

together so calmly that I could but listen in admiration of their bravery.

“‘Place the child in my arms at the first opportunity,’ he said, ‘and then grasp my waist quickly with both your arms. Now!’

“Immediately the child was passed to him, and her arms were tightly clasped around his waist. We four alone remained.

“‘I know there is no hope for us, dear husband,’ the lady said; ‘but I thank God that we are permitted to die together, as we must all die.’

“‘Yes,’ he said, ‘we must all die: there is no earthly hope of our reaching the shore alive; but sorrow will be of but a moment’s duration.’

“‘I fear not death,’ she said; ‘but oh, that it were God’s will to save our precious little child!’

“‘Give me your child,’ I said to the man, ‘and make an effort to save yourself and wife: it may be that you will reach the shore alive; and God knows I will do the best I can for your child.’

“There was no time to consider. The affectionate parents embraced and kissed their child, and in an instant I held it with my left arm. ‘Adieu!’ the mother said. ‘God be merciful!’ said the father.

“Suddenly the ship shot forward with her bow full toward the beach, and came down upon the second reef with such violence that, though we were as well as possible prepared for the shock, we were all dashed forcibly to the deck. Instantly I was upon my feet again, holding to my ring with one hand, and with the other lifting the child over my head and above the torrent that came rushing from stern to stem. I thought I should have to go with the sweeping flood in spite of all I could do, for the arm that held to the ring was almost torn from its socket, but the bow reared on high again and I was relieved.

“The man and his wife had gone. For a time I partly forgot my own condition, and gazed down over the ship’s side into the sea, and soon I saw at a little distance two heads rise nearly to the surface, then instantly disappear in the downward whirl; again the heads arose, higher than before,—it was the man and his wife; his left arm held her firmly still,—aye,

closely to his heart,—her bare white arms reached up and around his neck. They sank: I never again beheld them.

“Another of those great billows came and lifted high the stern; again the ship shot forward at a fearful rate of speed; but just as her bow was about to crash on the hard reef, I leaped from the gunwale with the child, and we were swallowed deep down in the raging floods. I arose struggling to the surface and held the child above my head, with one hand, as well as I could. Had I been alone, I should have despaired and sunk; but the little innocent that had been committed to my charge was dearer now to me than life, and madly I fought against the angry seas, wildly I struggled through them; and I conquered, for I reached the beach, still clinging to my little charge. For a time I thought she was dead; but no, she breathed! Life had not departed. She raised her head and opened her eyes. Oh, how great was my joy as I pressed that little dripping head to my bosom!

“After lying upon the sand for a few hours, I recovered my strength sufficiently to arise with the child and walk away down the beach, looking for the bodies of the man and his wife; but they were not found. And day after day, week after week, and even for more than a month, I patrolled the beach in the fruitless search.

“I had not been on the island long before I discovered that I was an eyesore to the rude people who lived near by. They refused food and shelter for even my little orphan. Piteously I pleaded, not for myself, but for the child; but they would only scowl upon me, and answer my pleadings with horrid oaths and threats of violence. For the sake of my starving charge, I humbled myself to the very dust; became a cringing coward; resented not even the grossest insult; but all for no good: the hard hearts were insensible to the touch of pity.

“Our case was a sad one indeed. Starvation stared us in the face. For weeks we subsisted on the clams and scallops that I gathered up near the shores of the inlet. But, to my great joy, the child seemed to be very fond of these, and never failed to eat them with a good relish. My daily programme was to go forth early in the morning and get a supply of these clams and scallops, take them to the old hulk that I had selected as a residence, and there break and eat, and feed them

to the child; then start off on the tramp up and down the beach, and at night return to the hulk to sleep.

“Our residence was the aft part of a ship that it seemed had been snapped square in two about amidships. The wreck had been there so long that the sands had piled up around it, and drifts had eddied to the inside until a smooth sand floor several feet deep had formed. My residence, which was about thirty feet long, received all its light from the broken-off end (for not even the smallest crack was anywhere else in it), and for this reason I slept as near the stern as I could get; for, being darkest there, we would better escape observation from prying ones who were sometimes seen skulking near.

“So greatly I became to dread the scowling savages,—my neighbors,—that I feared to leave my child an instant; so I found some cords, and lashed it securely to my person, and carried it about with me wherever I went; nay, I even slept with it in my arms and lashed to me, for fear it might be taken while I slept. One consoling thought was that my place of abode was at the barest and most desolate part of the whole coast, several miles from the huts in the thicket, and that a broad inlet was between them and me; for I knew that they would have no occasion to come near me unless it should be for the purpose of picking up wrecked things, or for the sole purpose of watching me and putting me to trouble.

“During the first days of my patrolling the beach I had picked up a few things that floated ashore from the ship: among these was a trunk that contained some articles of my child and its mother’s clothing; it also had in it a little box, in which were some papers and trinkets, and a small sum in gold coin. Whenever I found in this way anything that I thought might be serviceable to the child or myself, I would take it to the hulk as soon as possible, and bury it in the sand near the stern. But those things which, though valuable, were of no immediate use to me, I always gave to the natives that might first happen to come in my way, in the vain hope that by so doing I might gain their favor, and so benefit my child, or buy their assistance in the search for the dead bodies. They would sometimes promise, but never a promise was performed.

“Among those of the rude people whom I most dreaded was a woman who seemed to take great pleasure in throwing

herself in my way, only, I am sure, that she might have an opportunity to curse and scowl at me and my little child. She watched narrowly all my motions, and would dog my steps for hours at a time, either following directly after me, or skulking near enough to see all that I was doing. Knowing what the consequence of a difficulty with such a person under such circumstances would be, I bore all patiently (even submitting without a word of reply to her bitter taunts and curses), and never spoke to her except in a kind, respectful manner; nay, I tried in every manner to win her favor, not only by kind words, but by giving her the most valuable of the things that I found; but all that I did made no more impression upon her heart than if it had been stone.

“On that day that the trunk was found I went so far down the shore that it was dusky evening before I got back. I was within a few hundred yards of my hulk, when, by the merest accident, I came upon the trunk, that had been left by the ebbing tide directly in my path on the hard beach. Weary as I was, and heavy as was the trunk from having been in the water so long a time, I managed to raise it on my shoulder and get to the hulk with it. When I opened it and discovered the child's clothing, I was much pleased, for the little thing was in sad need of a change. Some of its clothing I took out, also the little box containing the coin; then I buried both trunk and box near together at the stern. The child was then fed with scallops, and in a few minutes it was asleep.

“I, too, was almost asleep, when, looking toward the open end of my hulk, I saw the figure of a woman enter and creep stealthily toward me. One advantage I had over her was that she could not see me, while I could see her every movement,—her cautious stepping, her feeling her way along by the side of the hulk, and her pausing at times and stooping her head toward me and listening, and then again advancing softly. I was greatly alarmed, for I saw that she carried a long knife in her hand, and well I knew that her intent could only be evil.

“My first impulse was to wait until she came very near, and then, without asking a question, strike her with the club that I always kept near me at night; but upon second thought I abandoned that design, for I questioned that even in such a case the taking of human life would be justifiable.

“ ‘Stand!’ I said. Though startled, she made no reply, but stood as she had been ordered to do.

“ ‘What are you here for?’ I asked. Still she replied not.

“ ‘Put that knife down on the sand,’ I said; ‘then turn and pass out, or you die instantly!’

“ She did as she was commanded, and I went and took the knife and followed her out. It was the woman who had been dogging my steps so long.

“ ‘What are you here for?’ I repeated, angrily.

“ ‘They are aimin’ to kill you and your baby to-night,’ she said, ‘and I’ve brought you that knife to fight with. Keep your eyes open!’

“ So astounded I was, that for some time I could not utter a word.

“ ‘They ain’t far from us now,’ she continued.

“ ‘Why is it, my good woman,’ I asked, ‘that any one desires to kill me? and who would hurt this little one that has never done wrong?’

“ If any answer came to my question I did not hear it, for then a terrible blow from an unseen hand was inflicted upon my head, and I fell senseless. I suppose it was not a great while before I recovered sufficiently to sit up. There was the woman, squatted on the sand a few feet before me; but my child was gone.

“ ‘Where is the child?’ I screamed, springing to my feet. ‘Where is the child?—tell me! Quick! quick! or I’ll plunge this knife to your heart!—tell me, tell me! Where is the child?’

“ ‘Come, now,’ she said, in the coolest and most unconcerned manner, ‘there’s no use gittin’ mad and stormin’ at *me*. I ain’t got your youngun, though I knows who has; but if that’s the way you’re goin’ to take on, I’m done.’

“ ‘Give me the child,’ I said, in a fury, ‘or I’ll kill you instantly!’

“ ‘Well, kill then,’ she said, as she arose deliberately to her feet; ‘kill! Then you’ll have to git your youngun the best you can.’

“ I rushed forward to plunge the knife into the wretch’s heart; but I had no knife,—it too had been taken while I lay there insensible.

“‘Ha! ha!’ the fiend laughed; ‘maybe him that knocked you down and got your baby got the knife too, didn’t he? See here,’ she said, ‘there’s no use makin’ yourself a fool; I’ve come to *help* you, like I said. I know who’s got the youngun, and *maybe* I can git it back for you; but then, if I was to do it, I should want more pay than *this*. I know what’s the matter with these folks that’s after you; they’ve got it goin’ around that you’ve got money buried hereabouts, and they’ve sot in to git it, but I guess I mought fix it up all right for you if I was of a mind to try.’

“‘My good woman,’ said I, humbly, ‘forgive my rude manner; I spoke in the frenzy of the moment, when I discovered that the child had been taken from me. Oh, get it back for me, get it back, and a good God will bless you for the merciful act! Get it and restore it to me, my good woman, for my life is wrapped in the precious child! It is an orphan whose parents were drowned when I was cast on the beach; they gave it into my charge before they died, and I vowed to God to save it if possible. It was saved from a death in the floods, and then it became mine, and dearer to me than my own life. Get it and restore it to me (for you say you can do so), and a lifetime of gratitude, besides all that I have or may get, I will give; then you will not be half paid for the generous act. Oh, get the child, get it for me; noble, generous woman!’

“‘But I *can’t* git it,’ she said, ‘till you git the money that you’ve got buried, and put it in my hands to take to them that’s got it; they’d kill *me* if I was to go to them for the youngun, and not have the money with me: so if you ain’t got nothin’ but *promises* to pay with, there ain’t no use of sayin’ any more about it, for that’s the eend of it.’

“‘Surely,’ said I, ‘you must *know* that I, who barely reached the shore with the child, brought no money from the wreck.’

“‘Well, ’sposin’ I did know that,’ she said; ‘do I know that you ain’t found some that’s come ashore since you’ve been here? Folks knows well enough that you ain’t been hangin’ about here all this long time lookin’ for dead ones. You knows that, too. And that ain’t all,’ she continued, as she turned to walk away: ‘you ain’t never goin’ to git that youngun back till the money that you’ve got buried comes. Folks says you’ve

got it,—I know you've got it; but then if you'd rather keep it than to git the youngun back, keep it; that's all.'

" 'Wait, wait,' said I, recollecting the little box with the coin; 'I *have* money buried that I had forgot. Come, let us dig it up.'

" 'Aha!' she said, with a horrible grin and chuckle, 'you *have*, have you? Well, le's git at it.'

" I went with her to the ship's stern and dug up the box, and gave it to her.

" 'What has you stopped diggin' for?' she asked, sharply. 'This ain't all!—this ain't *half*; it ain't *nothin'*. Don't stop diggin' yet!'

" 'It is every cent,' I said. 'There are fifteen Spanish doubloons, and it is *all*.'

" 'It ain't! it ain't!' she screamed; 'you're forgetful. You said there warn't *none*; but here is *some*. I tell you it's no use for you to be tryin' to fool them that knows some things as well as you does. You've got to git it *all*, or you won't see that youngun never no more,—there, that's plain talk.'

" 'But, I swear to you,' I said, wildly, 'that you have all; and if you doubt the truth of what I say, you may search where you will.'

" 'Sarch where I will, eh?' she screamed. 'What's the use for *me* to sarch? How should I know where it's buried? But you take me for a fool; so I ain't goin' to waste time no longer. Sarch, eh?'

" 'Wait! wait!' I said; 'have you no mercy? Can your heart feel no pity for one in my condition?'

" 'Pity, eh?' she said, in a contemptuous tone. 'Don't be talkin' to me about your *pity*, or I'll put this knife through and through you in one minit!'

" I saw, then, that she had the knife that had been taken from me, and she knew that I was entirely in her power.

" 'I have *other things* buried,' said I, 'but no more *money*; they are valuable. Bring the child to me and you shall have everything.'

" 'Other things, eh?' she said, triumphantly; 'I knowed it! No; I ain't goin' to bother my time about none of it no more. You, and the youngun too, may go to h—— if you're afeerd to trust me! Here I've run the risk of my life for you (and

like as anyway I shall git killed after all when I goes back), and you're afeerd to trust me!

" 'I am *not* afraid to trust you, good woman,' I said; 'and to show you that I am not, I will go now and dig the packages up for you, if you think best.'

" 'Think best, eh?' she said, fiercely; 'makes no difference to *me*!'

" 'Come, then,' I said, 'let us go and get them.'

" Again she followed me around to the stern; and I dug up everything that I had buried. 'Take them,' I said; 'they are all.'

" 'Now you had better git the *money*!' she said.

" 'You have *all*,' said I.

" 'You lie!' she said, angrily; 'you know you've got money buried,—and you must git it!'

" 'I have told you truly,' I said, in despair.

" 'Well,' said the woman, in a milder tone, 'I'll have to take *these* along, I guess, and see what I can do for you.'

" With that she left me, lugging the packages off toward the inlet. Never had I felt so utterly wretched and desolate. I moved about this way and that (for I could not rest an instant at the same place), moaning and wringing my hands. My eyes followed the woman as long as she could be seen through the dusk.

" Then it occurred to me that the child might not be far distant from me yet, and that I might follow her and possibly recover it. Instantly I determined upon the rescue, or that I would die in the attempt. I had no fear of death, and I would pursue the wretch, if need be, to the very door of her hut; for if the child were gone from me forever, I had nothing left but my life, and of what value would that be?

" Rapidly I ran on until at last I could discern the dim figures of *two* persons; no doubt the confederate who had stricken me and taken the child away had joined her, and was now assisting to carry the heavy packages. Frenzied as I was, I knew that it would be but madness for me to make an attack upon two desperate people, one of whom (very probably both) had arms, while I had none at all.

" Quick as thought I turned from the course I had been pursuing, but still continued on toward the inlet. Some weeks before I had found an old, rotten skiff, which I had concealed

as well as I could at a point in the inlet remote from the ordinary place of crossing; and now my plan was to hurry to that old skiff and cross to the other side before the others.

"Noiselessly, but swiftly, I paddled my boat along, and soon the opposite shore was reached: the other boat was not more than half-way across; I heard them coming. Then I sped across the loose sands toward the path that winds through the thicket to the huts: upon reaching it, I climbed into the top of a little oak that hung over the path, and waited for the coming of the fiends; my intention being to spring down upon their heads as they passed under me. Possibly they had the child with them, and I might recover it yet.

"It was not long before I heard their voices; then I could see them,—a man and the woman.

"‘I’m goin’ to stop here and blow a spell,’ the man said, ‘for that trunk’s heavy, and I’m tired.’

"‘Git under the shade of the trees,’ said the woman; ‘somebody’ll see us out here.’

"The man struggled on until he got under me, then he eased the trunk from his shoulder and sat upon it; the woman seated herself near by in the sand.

"‘Ain’t ther no money in this trunk?’ the man asked.

"‘I’ve told you there warn’t,’ she answered, angrily. ‘If he’s got money he knows how to keep it, for I’ve done my best, and I couldn’t git none out o’ him,—not a cent; but I’ll find it yet; for I know well enough he’s got it buried there.’

"‘You’re lyin’!’ said the man; ‘I know you got money.’

"‘You’re a liar!’ the woman answered, passionately; ‘I didn’t get a cent!’

"‘What was the use of killin’ the youngun for what’s here?’ the man asked.

"‘Is you gone and killed that youngun?’ she asked, as she sprang to her feet.

"‘Killed it? Yes! Didn’t you tell me when I was comin’ off with it that the best way to keep it from cryin’ was to cut its throat and then fling it into the inlet?’

"‘And didn’t you have sense enough,’ asked the woman, fiercely, ‘not to do it till we had got the money? That’s the eend of it! You’ve gone and killed the youngun before the money was got! I ’spected to git the money next time I went; but what’s the use of goin’ agin, when, like as anyway,

the first thing the man sees to-morrow will be that dead youngun,—for he's nigh about all his time walkin' up and down the shore, specially about the inlet, where he gits all his eatin'. Yes, that's the last of it; and all because you are a fool!

“ ‘If I'm a fool,’ said the man, ‘it's for mixin' myself up in your devil's messes!—but I'm done with sich after this! Here I've killed two folks to-night, and all to pleasure you; for what's I got by it? But I know well enough you've got money; and I mean to have my share of it, too.’

“ ‘You're a liar!’ said the woman, as she drew the knife from her bosom and held it threateningly before the man.

“ ‘Well,’ he said, in a more humble tone, ‘if you *ain't* got money I've killed two folks.’

“ ‘And *there* you are a liar, ag'in,’ she said. ‘Didn't I tell you that the man come to after you come off, and that he went and dug up these things at the stern of the wreck?’

“ All this time I was sitting on the limb, more dead than alive. My child had been cruelly murdered and thrown into the inlet by the heartless wretches. I groaned; for oh, how my heart ached! The man and woman, hearing the groan, started, and turned their faces up toward me, but it was so dark in the thick tree-top that they saw me not.

“ ‘That was his spirit!’ said he, in great alarm. ‘I *killed* him! I know I did!’

“ The woman was evidently badly frightened, for she made no reply, but only continued to look up into the tree. ‘I guess it was the wind,’ she said, at last. ‘I don't see nothin’.’

“ No longer able to control my feelings, with a maniac yell I sprang from the limb full into the woman's face, and crushed her to the earth. Then, seizing a club that was near by, I belabored her in the most unmerciful manner, and then left her lying there dead, as I supposed, to pursue the fleeing man.

“ On I went through the dreary path, yelling loudly at times, and at times calling out ‘*Stop, murderer, stop!*’ Soon I reached a hut, and imagining that the man I was pursuing lived at it, I burst through the door. But no soul was within. Then again I thought of the woman, and sped back, intending to spend my fury upon her already dead body,—but she had gone.

“ For hours I was running and walking about in every direc-

tion in the hope of finding either the man or woman (for I was a madman then. I had forgot that I had started out to rescue the child, and was only intent upon murdering the murderers), but no one was to be seen or heard.

"I passed through the thicket to the sound side. There I stood in silence. Reason was beginning to return. A boat was moored near by. I got into it, raised the sail, drew the anchor, and sailed away. Ah! bitterly I cursed the people who lived there as I sat with my face toward the land that I had just left.

"On I went, knowing nor caring whither. On I continued to sail, and the first land that my feet touched was the little beech-covered island in Wild Lake. There, away from human society, I have dwelt ever since. Twenty-nine years!

* * * * *

"Fifteen years passed, during which time I saw no human being. Fifteen years of solitary life, during which I was ever persuading myself that I hated all mankind, and that I preferred the society of the denizens of the forest to that of my kind. But ah, that was an age of misery! Fifteen years of misery! A terrible storm came. For three days the winds raged. All around in the wilderness trees were broken off and uprooted; all above and around was gloom and dreariness.

"During those three dark days my thoughts did nothing but dwell upon the far past,—the time when my life was glad and peaceful in the society of men. I knew that all those pleasures had departed never to return; and yet, for the first time in fifteen years, I had a longing to stand out once again in the sunlight of the world of human creatures and look around at the scenes that I so vividly remembered, if for but a moment. I would be content to return then again to my drear world, and dwell in it to the end of my life.

"The storm passed. A morning of sweet calm followed it. I left my hut and went and stood at the shore of Wild Lake. Its waters seemed to be more light and peaceful than I had ever seen them. I stepped into the skiff and paddled along to the creek; then into and through it into Picture River, that I had not seen before for years. On I went through Picture River into the lower creek, and still on through that toward the broad river. I know not why, but all this time I had

the feeling that I was doing wrong; yet I was happy,—aye, as a lunatic is happy, who has at last escaped from his long confinement.

“Still, on I went toward the world I hated. And oh, how I trembled for joy when my little skiff shot out from the narrow creek into the great blue river! Yonder—yonder away was the bright rim of the world within which men dwelt! I sat upon the thwart and held my paddle and laughed and yelled, trembling like a leaf as I did so. Again I dipped the paddle in the water and struck out toward the deep channel. I had the strength of a giant then, and the skiff fairly flew. I felt as one who is unexpectedly taken from the dungeon in which he has been fettered and bound during long weary years,—whose fetters are snapped, and who is led from the dreary cell and told that the heavenly sunlight is henceforth his.

“Again, after a pause in the middle of the river, during which I had been gazing wildly around me, I was gliding away over the water; and again I laughed and yelled, until the echoes seemed as if troops of madmen were holding high carnival at the shores. And so, back and forth and up and down I continued to go for hours. I had risen from the dark grave, and the beautiful world, in which I had once lived gladly, was mine again!

“My boat had reached a point several miles above the mouth of the creek. I was looking at the horizon away beyond the mouth of the river, and was about to turn back my boat, and bid farewell forever to the beautiful scenes, when I heard a strange, whining cry at the shore, a few rods distant from me. I listened: the sounds were repeated. I was familiar with the voices of all the animals that roamed in the great wilderness,—my home,—but this was the voice of none of them. Being curious to learn what it was, I paddled up to the shore, and began peeping and peering under the boughs and among the bushes; but although the crying was incessant, I could see nothing.

“The bow of the skiff went scratching among the twigs until it touched the land and stopped; and though I had arisen to my feet in the middle of the boat, and was looking with all my eyes, still, I could see nothing that uttered the feeble cries that I was continually hearing. Happening at last to glance into a little cove near the boat, I discovered an old, battered skiff that had worked its way under the clustering reeds and wild-

roses, and in the bottom of this lay two little babies! They were side by side on their backs. One of them was fast asleep, still; the other was kicking up its heels and crying lustily. So startled was I at this unexpected discovery that I came near leaping out of the boat into the river. It was some time before I could realize the truth of what I saw; but when I did so, oh, what a thrill of ecstatic gladness came into my heart! For a time I stood there, weeping and sobbing like a child. Then I got upon my knees, and thanked God fervently that he had placed the precious little waifs in my way,—two dear little babies!”

CHAPTER XXI.

FLEEING, THOUGH NOT PURSUED.

“TENDERLY I lifted the babes, one after the other, into my boat, and laid them on the bed of moss, that I had hastily torn from the overhanging limbs and spread for them, and soon they were both fast asleep,—for the moss-bed was soft, and they were, no doubt, weary from lying on the bare, hard planks. Then I paddled out a little way into the stream, and stood up and gazed all around in every direction for several minutes; but no one was to be seen, and I struck rapidly off toward the creek. On went my skiff, foaming, almost leaping, as she went. Ah, it was not long before I got to the creek’s mouth! Before entering it I stood up again, and looked all around; still, no one appeared in view. I felt relieved, and yet I was uneasy,—for, whose children was I flying away with to my solitary island? and would I not surely be pursued and overtaken? I must not wait! Away I went, on up the creek,—continually casting back my eyes at every turn and bend, expecting to see the pursuers, and yet knowing that it would be impossible for any boat to overtake me, with the start I had. Picture River was reached, and away my light skiff went flying and leaping and ploughing through its placid waters. Not once I had thought of tiring,—not once had I paused since leaving the broad, blue river,—and yet I was in an agony now, for here was a straight reach of broad water more than two

miles long. I feared even to glance back, for I was constantly listening to hear, '*Stop, wretch, or die!*' The lake was at last crossed, and as I was about to turn the bend and enter the narrow creek at the head of it, I glanced hastily back for the first time, but no soul was in view. Away astern, the swell that my boat had made had sunk to rest, and the beautiful waters there were gleaming like a mirror. Still, I halted not, for still I feared the pursuer; still, my skiff went bounding and foaming around the bends of the creek, and still I was continually turning back my eyes, expecting the pursuer, and imagining that the swashing at the shores of the wave that my boat raised was *his* boat in the wake of mine. I had no fears for myself, for I would not have hesitated to grapple with a giant then; but, oh, I might, after all, lose my new-found, my precious treasures! Ah, the pursuer might have been their own father,—nay, he might have been a demon,—his fiery eyes might have pierced me, his bitter curses might have rained upon me, his deadly arm might have been uplifted, but I would not have consented *to share* my treasures with him! I should have clung to the precious babes while I had strength to stand and strike.

“For some time after my skiff grounded at the little island of beeches I continued to stand, listening to catch sounds from the pursuer. But no sound came, not even faintly, from the distance. Then I sat upon the thwart, and looked and smiled upon my little half-naked innocents,—looked and smiled, while tears flooded my face. There they lay upon the bed of moss, side by side, cheek to cheek, still fast asleep. Oh, I laughed, I wept, I sobbed! Happy thoughts crowded into my mind. I would make them a rocking-cradle, a bed of otters' furs, and clothing of soft, pliable skins. But then the thought came,—how shall they be fed? Where should I procure food suitable for children not more than three or four months old? Gross meats, and the acid wild-berries would not do for *them*; but they must have something, and speedily, too. What, what should it be? How speedily are formed our attachments under certain circumstances. Three hours ago I knew not of the existence of my babes; now, the thought of their dying and my being separated from them made me most unhappy. I had rather died than lose them. Among my many pets at that time was a doe that had recently brought forth

young. The thought struck me that possibly food for my little waifs might be supplied by her. Full of this thought, I lifted them tenderly from their bed in the skiff into my arms, and carried them up and placed them upon my own bed in the hut. Then I went and separated the fawn from its mother. Then I took the little girl from the bed, and carried her and held her to the udders of my patient doe. Nor did I grow impatient at many failures, but continued to hold the child under the gentle animal, and after many attempts I succeeded in getting it to draw a plentiful supply of nourishment. I laid her again on the bed, and soon she was asleep again. Then I took the boy, but no inducement could get the stubborn little fellow to consent to take his food in such a manner; and after a full hour's patient but fruitless trial I was compelled to give it up and cast about for something else. I had caught in my traps on that morning a rabbit and some birds, and these I prepared for the table with all the art that I could bring to bear, in the hope that the dishes might be inviting and suited to the taste of the hard-headed little fellow, who, during the whole time I was preparing his dinner, did nothing but kick up his heels and cry at the top of his voice.

“Strange it may seem, yet the crying of these precious ones was music to me,—music that reminded me of the happiest period of my whole life,—though that period was the days of sorrow and anxiety when my dear little child was with me. I felt that much depended upon what I was now doing. If the attempt should prove a failure I should in all probability lose my pretty little boy, who would die of starvation. When I had got the meats cooked, I cut off some small bits and held them to the child's mouth. Imagine my delight at seeing the hungry little fellow not only vigorously sucking the pieces that I presented to him, but even taking in the smallest bits and swallowing them. He seemed to have a special relish for the roast rabbit, and was always ready to eat when it was presented to him. I had no difficulty afterwards in feeding either of the children (except that I made several unsuccessful attempts to get the boy to take milk from the doe), and they continued to be fat and rosy. So great became the attachment of my doe for its little nursling, that when the child got old enough to walk, the gentle creature would go voluntarily, whenever the little one would cry or seem to be distressed, and

stand over it, offering it nourishment; and it was seldom that she failed to quiet it. My love for the children grew with their growth, and I was as contented and happy now as I desired to be. I had no doubt, from their resemblance and equal age, that the little ones were twin brother and sister; but whether or not that be certainly so, I, of course, do not know; yet I have taught them to regard each other as such. I have taken great pains from the first dawning of their reason to instruct them as well as I was able. After they had learned to speak, I learned them to sing all the tunes that I knew, and then set to work composing for them—both words, and music to them. I talked to them a great deal about the *outside* world,—told them of the great numbers of people that lived in it, and of their ways and works,—how they crowded together in great numbers in towns and cities; how they erected great houses to live in, and to transact business in. I told them about the great ocean, and how ships plied upon it from place to place, carrying people and freights. I told them of seas, and lakes, and rivers, and islands, and plains, and lofty mountains. I told them of gardens and cultivated fields, and of grain and fruits that grew in them. I told them how people dressed, how they associated together, how they trafficked and traded. And I told them of God, and of Jesus Christ, and of heaven, and of angels; also of churches and schools, and of nations and governments. Though they never saw paper or ink, I learned them to write on the ground, and to form letters on the bark of trees and in soft wood, with a piece of hard reed whittled to a keen point; and so skilled have they become in the use of this simple instrument, that probably you would be surprised to see the pictures that they have drawn on the white, smooth bark of the beeches at home. They have learned to read, though they never saw a book, and to sing by note, though they never saw a sheet of music other than such as I drew for them in the sand or upon the smooth bark. Ever have I been inventing for their instruction; and, in all their games and amusements and frolics, I have been the third child. I think they have a fair knowledge of mathematics, geography, history, grammar, and composition rules. But especially do they delight in the study of natural history in their simple, *natural* way. I have from time to time brought in to them from the forest the young of the deer, bear, fox, wild cat, otter,

and of fowls and birds, and even of the alligator, of which there is abundance hereabout. These we fed and rendered tame; and, in course of time, we had of our grim pets quite a menagerie. Some of the individuals of the same I educated, too, and taught them to perform many tricks for our amusement. I made bows and arrows, and learned my children the use of them, and either Timon or Fawn is to-day as perfect a marksman as was ever William Tell or Robin Hood, for it is seldom that they fail to bring down the buck that shall venture within twenty rods of them. Thus has their teaching been; and so readily they have comprehended, that I have persuaded myself to believe that when they should come to see for themselves those things only the existence of which they know of, the sight would not greatly surprise them. And, believing this, I have been content; for I told them that the time would come that I would die, and that then they must go forth together and dwell in the bright world that they had learned of. Fourteen years have passed since I picked up my pretty waifs—and these are they—Fawn and Timon.”

“Indeed!” said Marie. “And are we the only persons, except yourself, that they have seen in the time?”

“They have seen no other,” old Basil answered.

“I suppose,” said Marie, “that you have become so wedded to your secluded life that you desire not a change?”

“I thought so, lady, until yesterday,” said old Basil; “until I saw the young man and his boat in Wild Lake. But every hour since that time I have been thinking—thinking! Thinking of the beautiful world from which I came, and in which I was once happy; thinking of the joys of my childhood, and youth, and early manhood; thinking of the once dear friends, whose images are still as perfect upon my heart as ever they were; thinking of *more* than these, that, possibly, after all, I was doing great wrong in keeping these precious children here, passing away their earthly existence in the heart of a great wilderness, cut off from civilization; isolated, separated from all God’s rational creatures! Thinking that the sunset of my day is fast approaching, and wondering how it would be with these when the darkness should shut in! Yes, lady, until yesterday, I thought that this wilderness would be my earthly home to the end. I had selected a spot under a great branching beech, and told my children to bury me there when

death should come. But in all my teachings, how could I teach them what death is? They that have never seen death! I shall not be buried on the island in the lake, though calm and peaceful might be the resting-place. The great busy world in which I was born and reared must give me a last resting-place. All the pleasures of this wild life are now spent. I can nevermore be content here. I feel now that I must lose no time in taking my children into the world, where God intended they should be. Never again shall I behold the spot where I have so long dwelt, and where, for fourteen years at least, all has been gladness for me. Upon leaving the green island and the calm waters of Wild Lake on yesterday, I had no doubt but that I should return before the sunsetting; *then* I would make known my plans to my dear children; and then we would bid farewell forever to the still solitudes that I had learned so to love,—the only world that my precious children have ever known. But we will never return. To-morrow we will depart from hence, but in another direction; to-morrow we will turn our faces toward civilization—toward the light that these have not known,—to-morrow;—I know not when or where we will rest, but not until the habitation of man shall be found! Yes, *to-morrow* we will make the start."

"To-morrow?" asked Jeannot.

"To-morrow?" asked François.

"And never again return to Wild Lake and the Island of Beeches?" asked Paul.

"Nevermore go to the calm Solitude? Never again greet the Spirit of Picture River?" asked Lucie.

"Dear Basil!" said Fawn, throwing her arms around the old man's neck, and weeping and sobbing there,—"*dear Basil, never return?—never?—nevermore!*"

"Never, child!" said the old man, firmly but kindly. "Nevermore!"

"And never again see Gracie and her pretty ones?" sobbed Fawn.

"They, child, will return whence we took them," said the old man. "God gave them life here in the wilderness. He gave *them* home here; but though *their* home, it is not ours."

Again the sorrowing child wept, moaning.

"Dear Fawn," said Timon, as he placed his arm affec-

tionately around his sister's waist and kissed her tear-wet cheek, "do not weep so sadly. Basil is good; and he is far wiser than we. The God that he has taught us to pray to will provide, not only for Gracie and her pretty ones, but also for us. Weep not so, dear sister! I am sure it is better that we should go away, for Basil says it is."

"My noble boy!" said old Basil. "Too noble to dwell out the life that God has given in this wild!"

"I am resigned now, dear Basil," said Fawn, raising her head, and smiling sweetly through her tears. "You know best."

The old man's heart was too full to speak; he could only press more closely to his bosom the beautiful girl whose heart throbbed quickly on his.

"No point in the wide world to aim to?" said Marie, in a low tone to herself, as she looked thoughtfully into the little streamlet. "It is a cold world, and these are tender lambs!"

"Yes," said the old man, who had heard the whispered words. "But God is their shepherd."

"How long, François," asked Paul, "are *we* to remain here?"

"I have been asking myself the same question, Master Paul. I know no good reason why we should continue here another day. What think you, Jeannot?"

"I am glad to say that we agree," Jeannot answered. "We have been here more than a month. No doubt Pedro and his gang have gone from the coast. And now the trouble that I chiefly apprehend is the matter of the boat that we brought away. I must admit that I have some dread of the rude people who live upon the coast. I fear they will combine and make common cause against us for the taking and bringing away that which is the banker's chief wealth,—his boat. However, sooner or later, we *must* return, let the consequences be what they may; and I am inclined to think that the sooner we go the better it will be for us. Therefore, in my opinion, we can do nothing better than to make an early start to-morrow morning. But what is the lady's opinion? Her judgment may be better than ours."

"My kind and generous friends," said Marie, "I am disposed to leave all with you, who have acted so nobly toward

me and my children. I feel that God has sent you to protect us, who are weak and utterly unable to do anything for ourselves. And sure I am that, whether all shall turn out well or ill for us in this life, you will not fail to be rewarded for your disinterested and manly conduct. Your judgment, my friends, is so far superior in these matters to mine, that I prefer not to express an opinion, but rather to abide by what you may think best to do."

"But, lady," said François, "it is very important that we should all consider well the suggestion that has been made before we act. It may be that disaster will follow whatever course we may adopt,—that ruin will follow all our care and prudence: therefore we prefer to hear from you,—whether your preference is to remain here yet longer, or to start out to-morrow as has been suggested."

"Heretofore," said Marie, "I have said nothing by way of interference with your plans and arrangements, which I am sure were the best that could have been thought of; and, much as I have desired to learn something of my dear husband, I was content to abide here a time and hope; for I knew that it would be but folly to rush with these precious ones into the gaping jaws of death and ruin. My sure trust has been, and still is, in Our Father, who sees and knows all things. But, as you desire an expression of my opinion now, I will say that I fully concur with you, and think that the sooner we return to the coast the better."

"Oh, I am so glad!" said Lucie, clapping her hands as she spoke,—“so glad that we are going out to-morrow to look for dear, dear, dear papa! I know he has been all this long time sadly searching and inquiring for us; and now we are going to search for him. Do you think, François, that we shall soon find him after reaching the coast?"

"I pray God we may," the feeling-hearted man answered.

"And then," continued the glad girl, "we shall have dear Fawn along with us too. We can all go in the boat together, can we not, François?"

"Without difficulty," François answered; "but it may be that such an arrangement might not suit these who are strangers to us. We shall have great dangers to encounter; and it would not be reasonable or right for us to expect that others, who have not a common interest with us, should share our dangers,

—certainly not until they should be fairly warned of our condition.”

“I well understand your condition,” said old Basil; “and yet, I am not sure but that we shall have as great dangers and risks to contend with as you will have. I know that an old man and helpless children might be more a clog than benefit to you, even if you should consent to take the additional burden upon yourselves of our going with you. Only one thing I could promise in such a case; and that is, that I would willingly do everything that might be in my power to do for the general good. It may be that I should not be able to do much; yet I am blessed still with health and strength, and I might be of *some* assistance. I had no idea of this when I came, as I have said before. For my plan was, that my children and myself should make our way from Wild Lake through the wilderness to the sound, and there await for an opportunity to cross over to the coast. Or, if there should be no other way to cross, to construct a raft of dead wood that we could gather, and then wait for a fair wind to waft us over. But if you consent to take us in your boat, we should be saved a world of trouble. Understand me, though, my friends, this suggestion should never have come from me; for it would be the farthest from my thoughts to delay or hinder you; for I pray God that all may speedily end well, not only for this dear lady and her children, but also for you, their brave protectors.”

“Not only do we consent for you to go with us,” said François, “but we shall be thankful for your assistance and advice. As to its being convenient for us to take you along, I would say, as you yourself know, that we have plenty of room in the boat; besides, the addition of your weight would be of great benefit to us, in case we should be beset with high winds upon reaching the broad waters of the sound.”

Paul was so delighted at hearing all this that he did not know how to express his feelings. “What do you think, little Bobkins,” he said; “we are going off to-morrow to see papa! Do you want to go along with us as a passenger? Mind you though, if you go, you must not be continually coming out of the cabin and romping about on the decks. Never leave the cabin before getting mamma’s permission!”

“No, I won’t, buddy,” said Murat.

“I don’t know so much about *that*,” said Paul; “you prom-

ised papa the same thing when we were on the ship, and somehow or other you managed to be with the sailors fully half the time. I came upon you messing with them at least half a dozen times, you know,—*you* know I did, you frisky little Bobkins!"

"But I won't do so no more, buddy. François and Jeannot say that I am a great big boy now; and I was a little boy then."

"Very well," said Paul, pompously; "I suppose we will have to try you."

"Oh, Fawn," said Lucie, "you will see so many things, and so many people! I know you will be delighted."

"Timon," said Paul, "I think I can be of great service to you, by pointing out and explaining to you much that you know nothing of. It will be well for you to keep as close to me as you can all the time."

Timon smiled as he modestly thanked the large-hearted young gentleman for his generous intentions.

"Oh, mamma," said Murat, "ain't you glad that we are going to see papa?"

"God grant, my dear little boy," said Marie, "that we may soon see him or have tidings from him."

Great was the excitement at the camp during the remainder of the day. Jeannot busied himself cooking a large quantity of fish and meats, for there was now a large company of fair eaters to be fed, and it could not be told how long they would be on the way. Two or three quarters of dried venison, and several large pieces of bear meat that François had dried and smoked, besides the victuals that Jeannot had been cooking, were put into the boat, and, besides all this, one full sack of the ship-bread that had been carefully husbanded for an emergency.

François put the boat in good order. Over the bow-end he fitted a framework for an awning: this was so fitted that, by unshipping the mast, a very comfortable and rain-proof shelter could be rigged in a few minutes' time, by spreading the main-sail over it. This done, he brought a quantity of dry moss and pine straw and put it in the bottom of the boat, and over this he spread a number of skins with the fur-side up. And by the time night set in everything was in readiness for the voyage, except that the tent had not been taken down and the sails rigged to the mast; but that would be the work of only a few minutes in the morning.

"Now, Master Paul," said François, "the ship will be loosed from her moorings and off before the dawning of another day. Her stores are all on board, and her furniture complete and in order. Take care to be awake in good time, or you may be left behind."

"No danger of being left," said Paul, "for Timon and I have concluded that we will sit straight up and talk the whole night out. You know I have a great deal to tell him before we start."

"I do not think the arrangement a good one," said François, "for both you and Timon will feel much better to-morrow after a good night's rest. You need not, indeed, fear oversleeping yourself, for, depend upon it, you will have noise enough around you to wake you; and besides, Jeannot and I will be here to take the house from over your heads."

"That is funny, isn't it, Timon,—making houses of boat-sails, and boat-sails of houses? I really do believe that François and Jeannot can do anything in the world!"

At the first dawning of day, on the following morning, the whole company embarked at Pine Island landing, and the little ship moved away through the dark Arcade and out into the calm waters of Picture River. Scattered orbs still glittered in the sky, and Venus, star of morning, most glorious of the host, hung like a silvery lantern from the blue dome above the dreaming lake.

The oars were placed in the rowlocks, and the boat glided away through Picture River to the music of the regular plash and rumble, and the hum of bubbling waters at her prow.

CHAPTER XXII.

OPENING FIRE FROM THE MASKED BATTERY.

"If that yonder ain't Jim Beam's cunner, I never seed her in my life!" said Peggy Strubl, pointing out towards Croatan Bluff, at a boat that was slowly creeping along before the light breeze. "*It's her sure!* and them devils is comin' back! Well, let 'em come! But if they don't look sharp they won't run

over everything *this* time, like they did afore. Let 'em come on!"

At the time Peggy spoke, she and her son and Nancy Weathers were standing at the sound shore. They had just come out of the thicket, and descended the slope of the little ridge, that runs all along parallel with the shore, to the water's edge, where was, hauled half out of the water, a light skiff, such as the North Banker uses for fishing his nets in the shallow waters.

It is a wonder that the coming boat had not been descried from the top of the ridge, for the banker has a quick eye that habit has taught to sweep the great watery plains in an instant of time; and it is seldom he reaches an elevation in his path, however slight it may be, that the whole scene around is not pictured on his eye before he descends to the level again. But Peggy and her companions had been wrangling as they came along as to who should go back to the shelter for the net-stakes and bailing-gourd, which she insisted had been left, but which Pete and Nancy said were already in the skiff; so, when they passed over the ridge, all eyes were turned towards the skiff, to see whether the lacking things were in it or not.

It was when they reached the skiff, and were standing there at its bow,—Peggy with the nets in her hand that they were on their way to set, Nancy with a paddle and a couple of light oars on her shoulder, and Pete with his shoulder against the bow, preparing to push the boat off into the water,—that Peggy looked out upon the waters for the first time, and recognized the boat that had been so long lost.

"It does look like her, sure enough," said Nancy, gazing out. "They're headin' this way, too. I guess they had sich easy times when they was here before that they ain't agoin' to sneak up now like they did then; but maybe they'll find out after a spell that *they* ain't all that can sneak. Shouldn't wonder if somebody else don't try that trick this time. It does look like her."

"It is her, too," said Pete. "There ain't nary mainsail cut like that that goes about on these waters: look at that sharp peak; and see how high her bow sets out o' the water. It's her."

Peggy Strubl had not heard the remarks made by Nancy and Pete, nor did she need to hear them to be convinced of

the truth of what she had asserted, for no one better knew Jim Beam's boat than she did. Instantly, after speaking, she had dropped the bundle of nets on the sand and ascended the ridge again, on her way back towards the thicket. Upon reaching the summit she turned her face again towards the coming boat, as if for the purpose of removing any shade of a doubt from her mind that might remain. Then, rapidly descending on the opposite side, she hurried up the path towards the rude shelter which she and her companions had left a short time before.

This shelter, which was the abiding-place of herself and her son and Nancy, had been recently erected near the ashes of the hut that Pedro's band had burned a month before. It was a rude dwelling,—four forks and four poles constituted the frame of it, and it was roofed with a few old boards and the branches of trees. On the back and two sides, branches wattled together took the place of weather-boarding, and the open front answered the place of both doors and windows. Within this dwelling rushes and sea-grass were spread on the sand for bedding. Attached to the rear roof-pole were two wooden hooks, that served as a rack for the two long, flint-and-steel guns, and from these hooks hung the powder-horn, shot-gourd, and little canvas bag that contained flints and wadding. Nothing else was within the dwelling. In front of it was a kettle and a broken frying-pan; there, and with these utensils, the family cooking was done.

Peggy entered and walked straight back to the rack and took down one of the guns and the powder and shot. A double charge of powder was poured down the barrel, upon which an oakum wad was well rammed; two ounce-balls were dropped on that, and these were wadded and rammed; the pan and touch-hole and flint were then carefully examined; after all which the woman hurried back to the shore with the gun.

"Cuss their hearts!" she hissed through her clinched teeth, as she approached her companions, "maybe they've got it into their heads she won't kill; but I'll risk her now! They shall see that everybody don't shoot powder-guns, if Jim Beam did!"

"What is you goin' to do with that gun, mammy?" asked Pete, as his mother laid the gun down on the sand. "Don't you know that *one* can't do nothin' against *ten*? Is you goin' to shoot into them folks?"

"Wait and see," the woman answered, frowning darkly as she spoke. "Maybe I knows well enough what I'm doin'."

"Needn't a been in sich a hurry to git the gun," Nancy growled, "for it'll take 'em two hours yet to come near enough to shoot 'em."

"Don't I know that?" said Peggy. "No, they ain't aimin' to git here till after night shuts in. They've got more deviltry in their heads: I see *that* plain enough. They'd put the oars out if they wanted to come; but they're goin' to baffle about out there till it comes on dark, and then they're goin' to change their course and land above us. I see what they're up to. I'm studyin' for 'em: but let 'em come on, fast or slow. I'm ready for 'em any way."

"Yes," said Pete, impatiently, "and you're fixin' to git sarved like daddy was. Don't you *know* we three can't stand up to them ten?"

"If you're afeerd of 'em, you nasty sarpent," said Peggy, "I ain't; nor I wouldn't be if there was a hundred of 'em. If there's many or few of 'em, *all* of 'em ain't goin' to leave North Banks that lands out of that boat. That ain't all neither: that cunner's got to be got back from them devils, and you, and me, and Nancy Weathers has got to git her."

"Hadn't I better go tell Stam, and Len, and Sol, and the others to come and help about it?" asked Pete, in astonishment at the rash resolution of his excited mother. "I tell you, mammy, we three'd have a devil of a time of it with them ten."

"How do you know there's *ten*?" asked Peggy, fiercely; "but then I don't care if there's *a hundred*, I tell you. No: I ain't goin' to have no Stam Weathers nor Len Curtses around me. The first thing they'd do would be to go out in the sound to meet 'em and tell 'em we was waitin' here to shoot 'em. It's got to be did by *us*. There, that's plain, I guess."

"You'd better not be a fool," said Pete. "Ain't I had to do with 'em once? And don't I know what they is?"

"Now, see here, Pete Beam: maybe you think I'm goin' to run,—run, eh? I'd see 'em in h—— first! No, I'm goin' to stay right here and wait for 'em, and you and Nancy Weathers is goin' to do the same: and now, maybe you can guess what made me bring this gun in sich a hurry? If any one of you shows *run* when they comes, I'll just put two

ounce-balls through your lights in less'n no time; that's what I'll do! Peggy Strubl has got her plans laid this time; and it makes no difference to you what they is, only that you two is goin' to help to carry 'em out. Git in that skiff, Nancy Weathers, and take the bow-oar! And you, Pete Beam, set there on the starn-seat, with the paddle ready to steer. I'm goin' out yonder to see how many they is, and how they're settin', before it gits too dark to see 'em."

"You'd better stay where you is," said Pete. "How do you know but what they've got guns? And even if they shouldn't have, like enough they've got four oars to our two. Don't be a fool, mammy."

"Fool or not, I'm goin' out there in this skiff. I'm goin' to run 'round them devils too; and you and Nancy is goin', like I told you."

Nancy looked savagely toward the speaker: a horrible scowl was on her face. "Who *said* I was goin'?" she growled.

"I said so," said Peggy, as she advanced, and held her clinched fist before the hag's withered face. "Now tell me what else you wants to know before we starts. Git in that skiff! Now!"

Nancy made no reply, but turned and stepped suddenly into the boat as she had been commanded to do. Taking her seat on the bow-thwart, she placed her oar in the rowlock, and waited in grim silence for further orders.

Pete stood hesitating still. "They'll kill us," he said, "sure as we go; and nary one of us won't never git back."

"Git in there!" said the scowling fiend. "I'm goin', and Nancy's goin', and you are goin'. We are goin' to pull,—you to steer."

Pete well knew the danger of further argument: he seated himself in the stern, paddle in hand; and Peggy, wading, pushed the boat along before her, out to water that was deeper than her knees.

"Is you fool enough to start out sure 'nough?" asked Nancy, as Peggy stepped into the boat, and seating herself, put the aft oar in its place.

"I told you I was goin'," said Peggy. "Yes, I'm goin', and you're goin', and Pete's goin'. You may b'lieve that!"

Demon though Nancy was, she knew well enough the consequence of disobedience now; for she, in her old age, lacked

much of being the physical equal of the stalwart woman who commanded her. Her only reply was through her fiery eyes.

"Now, maybe you're both ready!" said Peggy. "And see here, Pete; I've got this oar in my hand: I can *hit* as well as *pull* with it. You know what larboard and starboard means; mind your helm, then, when you hears me call!"

"I guess," Pete humbly suggested, "we'd better keep well off from 'em, hadn't we? Maybe it's like I said, that they've got guns or four oars."

"I don't care if they've guns and fourteen oars!" said Peggy. "You ain't nothin' to do but steer, and Nancy ain't nothin' to do but pull that bow-oar. If they kills us, or catches us, let 'em do it!"

Neither Pete nor the bow-oarsman had another word to say, and the little boat shot away with the speed of the wind.

Before dipping her oar into the water the aft-oarsman had bared her saffron-hued arms to the very shoulders, and now at every stroke she made with the tough bending oar the great muscles of those powerful arms would swell and sink with the strain. And though she that pulled the bow-oar did it with graceful ease, yet her strength and endurance were taxed to the utmost. Incessantly and with all her might she labored, but almost threescore-and-ten years were now weighing upon her, and it was not with her as it had been in the days gone. The helmsman bore hard down in her favor, yet even then it was all he could do to keep the flying boat in her true line while that stalwart aft-oarsman was plying her strengthful strokes.

The little mop loosened and fell from the crown of Nancy's head, the tangled twist unwound, and the thin cloud of snow-white hair streamed out before her face; but there was no time to rest now, and she toiled and labored on, leaning back on the bending oar and keeping regular time with her fellow.

An instant Peggy eased away, and turned her head and looked at the coming boat that was now near at hand. "Starboard!" she called; "keep about a hundred yards off, run all 'round her, and then back to shore! Keep your eyes about you, Pete, and count them that's aboard; it ain't so dark but you can do it. See where they're settin'!"

It was not long before the circuit was completed, and the skiff was foaming shoreward.

"How is it?" Peggy asked of the steersman.

"There's ten in her," said Pete; "five settin' huddled together in the bow, two in the stern, and three on the middle thwart,—one o' them three looks like the Portugee."

Not another word was said by any one in the skiff; on she went as fast as before, until her flat bottom went grinding on the sandy shore. That instant Peggy leaped out into the shallow water and ran through it to the dry beach, and still on, over the ridge and up the path to the shelter. The other gun she took from the rack and loaded as she had done the first; then she hurried back with it to the skiff.

Nancy Weathers, utterly exhausted, had got out and dragged her weary limbs up on the sand, and when Peggy returned she found her lying stretched out, and without the power to arise to her feet. Pete was sitting on the head of the skiff, mute, but keenly watching his mother's movements; nor durst he ask her questions now.

The coming boat was hid now behind the shadows of evening, but the rumble of oars told that, contrary to the prophecy Peggy had made, she was coming straight on, and that she was not far away.

"Take this," said Peggy to her son, as she handed to him the gun that she had just brought from the shelter; "they'll be near enough in five minutes, but don't shoot till I do, for I want to send two balls after that hell-hound of a Portugee the first thing that's done! Aim *your* gun into the bows, where they're thickest, and wait till I shoots. Cuss their hearts; they shall have it hotter than it was when they come before!"

Pete received the gun in silence; the mother took the other from the sand; then side by side mother and son kneeled upon their right knees, with their faces toward the coming boat, and peered through the darkness, both listening attentively, both with their fingers resting on the triggers.

"Here they are!" said Peggy, in a whisper; "be ready!" mind you don't shoot till the smoke of my gun rises over your eyes, so as you can see what you're doin': they ain't goin' to git in much closer with their load,—but fifty yards will do. Now! I hear their bottom scrapin'. I'm goin' to shoot!"

A flash, a loud report; then heart-rending screams at the

boat; then a deep groan from her that shot. Peggy Strubl tumbled back on the sand and was still.

Pete saw nothing but the boat before him, heard nothing but the loud report,—which was to him but the signal to shoot,—thought of nothing but the work he had in hand to do. His gun was raised at a steady aim on the dim figures in the bow, and he waited but an instant for the whiff of white smoke to pass away. But while he thus waited a twang was heard at the boat, and then an arrow came whizzing through the air and pierced deep into the marksman's right shoulder as his finger drew back the trigger. Then another bright flash, another loud report, another scream of distress from the boat, and two balls went whistling over the mast toward Roanoke Island.

Nancy, who had all this time been lying on the sand in a state of semi-stupor, arose to a sitting posture, and stared about and around her. "Who's that shootin'?" she asked; but no answer came to her question, for Peggy was lying back on the sand, her right leg doubled under her, and her rolling, twittering eyes sparkling in the starlight, at times breathing heavily and at times snoring and gurgling as one tortured by horrible dreams; and Pete was fleeing over the ridge. "Who's that shot?" she asked, in a louder voice. Still no answer came; the only sounds she heard were the rumbling oar-strokes, and she could dimly see a boat hasting away from shore. Again she turned her eyes from side to side and gazed bewildered about. She could comprehend nothing, and yet she knew that something had gone wrong. Her first positive recollection was that she had gone out in the skiff,—her pained and stiffened limbs reminded her of this,—then she remembered the coming of Jim Beam's boat toward the shore, and that the purpose of going out was to meet her and ascertain the number and position of those on board; but nothing more she knew. She had not known of Peggy's bringing the second gun from the shelter; nor had she known of mother and son's kneeling to shoot at those who were approaching. The loud reports had waked her from her deathlike stupor; she saw Pete flying toward the thicket, and there, near her, Peggy was lying in the sand, seemingly unconscious of what was transpiring around; a boat was retreating out to wider and deeper waters. She could only conjecture that Pedro and his

desperadoes had landed and killed Peggy and wounded Pete, and again escaped with the boat, while she had been lying there on the shore asleep.

"Who was that shootin'?" asked Sol Curt, who came running up to the place where Nancy was sitting; "and what's so much fuss about? Warn't women hollerin' a spell ago?"

"Who is you talkin' to?" asked Nancy.

"I'm talkin' to you. Who was that hollerin'?"

"Ask Peggy Strubl, for I don't know nothin' about it. Here she is, layin' down here by me; maybe she'll tell you, if you can wake her up: I can't wake her."

"How come she to be sleepin' there, and sich a fuss goin' on?"

"Ask *her* that, too, for I don't know."

"Were there not women shrieking?" asked Pierre de l'Auzanne, who came rushing up almost out of breath.

"I ain't been shriekin'," Nancy answered, gruffly.

"But tell me, good woman," said Pierre, "did I not hear female voices shrieking here a few minutes ago?"

"How is I to know what you heerd?" she asked. "Is I got to keep 'count of every woman that hollers on North Banks and tell *you* about it?"

"Come this way," said Sol. "Here she is,—dead, I believe."

"Dead! who is it?" asked Pierre.

"Looks like Peggy Strubl."

"Get a torch, Sol," said Pierre. "Call the others out: quick, man! quick! She is not dead yet, for I hear her breathing!"

"What's it to you if she be dead or not?" growled Nancy. "Is you here to keep things to rights? If she's dead or not, I don't know as that's any of your bizness!"

"Brute!" said Pierre, angrily, "have you no mercy?—no pity?"

"Who is it that's about dead?" asked Stam Weathers.

"I cannot tell," Pierre answered. "This way with the light, Sol."

"It's Peggy Strubl," said Stam; "bilged and sinkin', that's sure! She's been shootin', and the gun's busted in her hand; that's what's the matter! See here, she's holdin' on to the

britch tight enough yet,—ain't that a piece of the barrel stickin' in her head?"

It is difficult to imagine a more horrible sight than the poor creature presented. Her head was lying in a pool of blood; her face and neck were badly gashed and disfigured, and in her forehead a splinter of the gun-barrel, three or four inches long, was embedded,—it had pierced deep into the brain. She breathed but twice, at long intervals, after the light was brought, and then the light-gray eyes that had been continually rolling in their sockets and staring vacantly about, were still and lustreless. She sighed deeply,—it was her last breath.

During this whole time Nancy had not stirred from her seat in the sand, but had only sat there scowling darkly and sullenly, first at one then at another of those who stood around the mangled woman; occasionally, and as if by accident, glancing at her; but not once came the faintest gleam of pity to light her demon face.

"Come, friends," said Pierre, "let us remove her from here and lay her body out straight."

"Move her? Where to?" asked Stam.

"Did she not dwell near by?"

"Yes, where she stayed ain't far off; but I should say it was best to scratch a hole for her *here*, and then the trouble will be over."

"No, Stam," said Pierre; "such treatment would be unchristian—inhuman. Let us take her to the place where she has been dwelling."

"Well, if that's it," said Sol, "the sooner the better. Lift her a little, Stam, and let me pull her leg from under her. I guess she must a been kneelin' on this knee:—that's it!—Now, cap'n, if you and daddy'll take the head eend, Stam and me will catch a hold o' the feet. Here goes! O—e—ho!" And the limber corpse was carried over the ridge and laid out on the sea-grass bed beneath the shelter.

Kate brought up the rear with the blazing torch. Great was the surprise of all upon entering the rude dwelling to find Pete there. He was sitting flat on the sand and leaning his back against one of the forks that upheld the roof. He seemed scarcely to be aware of their presence, but, from his writhing and moaning, it was evident that he was suffering intense agonies.

"What are you settin' there for?" asked Stam; "and what's brought all this about? Was you hurt, too?"

Pete only groaned deeply.

"Here's a reed arrow stickin' through and through his shoulder," said Kate, in great surprise. "What's done it, Pete?"

"Don't ask me nothin' about it," groaned Pete. "Pull it out."

Len took the head of the arrow in his grasp, and putting his bare right foot against the body of the wounded lad, he pulled with all his strength, apparently unmindful of the groans and contortions of the sufferer, and drew it through and out. At Pierre's direction, and by his assistance, the lad's dingy shirt was drawn from his body and then taken to the sound and dipped in the water; it was then bound to the wounded shoulder, and the sufferer felt relief.

"Now," said Pierre, "tell us about this terrible affair. How did it come about?"

Pete hesitated, but was finally induced to give an account of the whole affair from first to last.

"And your unfortunate mother was the woman we heard screaming?" Pierre asked.

"No she warn't, neither," Pete answered.

"It warn't mammy; I know that well enough," said Stam. "She wouldn't take on that way, if she should git sliced up from head to foot. It warn't her."

"No, it warn't her neither," said Pete. "It was somebody in that boat. I guess there was a woman in there that that Portagee and his devils picked up somewheres."

A solemn silence followed.

"Runs in my head, cap'n," said Len, "that your folks was in that boat."

No reply came. Pierre was not to be seen.

"Go, Stam, go!" said Kate. "He's gone for a boat to follow 'em. Go, go, and help him!"

Stam rushed out and was soon lost in the darkness.

"Sol," said Len, "go git our cunner ready. Put four oars in her. We'll catch 'em in her if they'se to be kotch. Quick, boy, quick! I'll come as soon as Stam and me gits up by the cap'n."

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE LOOKOUT AT NORTH END.

THOUGH Sol ran with all haste to get ready the canoe, as his father had directed, yet when he reached it he found two men already there,—they were Pierre and Stam.

It was evident, from what Stam was saying, that Pierre had reached the boat first, and that he had drawn in the anchor, and was pushing it out, upon Stam's arrival.

"Why, just think of it, man!" said Stam, as he stood out there, over his knees in the water, holding to the gunwales; "what could you do in this cunner and no one to help you? and nothin' but a sprit to work her with, at that? And, then, s'posin' you was to go and come up by 'em, what could you do, single-handed, against ten sich devils? They'd kill you in no time! *Then* you'd lose all, sure 'nough! Sure as you're born, you ain't doin' for the best; and if that's the way you lays off to go on, you'll spile everything in short order. Take things along quieter like, for that's best. Now, I should say that if me and you and Len and Sol was to take oars, it would be better than what you've started to do, by big odds. This is the quickest boat in smooth water, like it is now, that can be skeered up. Here comes Sol with oars: that's sorter like it. Where's Len, Sol?"

"He's gone up the beach, lookin' for the cap'n. Call him, or no tellin' where he'll stop."

Then Stam stepped up on the high bow, and holding both hands up to his mouth to take the place of a speaking-trumpet, he called out, in a stentorian voice, "Len!"

It was not long before a reply was returned from away up the beach, "Here!"

Again Stam placed his hands to his mouth and called, "Come!" Then, addressing Pierre again, he said, "Don't you think our way's best? You see, we four can shoot this boat ten mile through the deep water whiles you should be workin' her one with nothin' but that sprit to work with."

"You are right," Pierre groaned; "but, for heaven's sake, delay not!"

"Len'll be here by the time we gits ready," said Stam, "for the thwarts and rowlocks is got to be fixed for four, the mast is to unship, and some of this water must be bailed out. You and the cap'n can take the bow oars when we start, Sol; me and Len will take the aft."

Soon was heard the heavy tramp of Len coming down the shore, and his voice calling out, "Is all right?"

"We are waitin' for *you*," Stam answered.

"Wait! wait, Stam!" called a female voice; "wait till I come."

"What's the matter now, Kate?" asked Stam. "Quick, gal; don't keep us here, for we're losin' time now."

"Here's a passel of wittles I've brought for you to take with you. You mought need it before you gits back."

Sol received the victuals from Kate's hand and stowed it under the bow. Then the centre-board was pegged up, the sand-bags so arranged as to bring the boat on an even keel, and then the four oars plashed in the water, and the little boat shot out in the darkness channelward.

If those four men had had the light of day to favor them, the task of catching the other boat would have been comparatively an easy one; but they labored under the greatest of disadvantages: the thick darkness was around them, and they knew not which way to shape their course. They felt sure, however, that those of whom they were in pursuit would not risk a landing either anywhere on the coast-reef or on Roanoke Island, but it was most probable that they would return in the direction from whence they came: so they were not long in coming to the determination to run with all speed towards the Croatan shore,—possibly they might get there before the others could effect a landing and escape.

At times, as they went on their way, they would ease on their oars and listen attentively. But never a sound could be heard; dead calm reigned.

The Croatan shore was reached: still, not a sound. Then they turned away, and went ploughing rapidly up and down the sound, this way and that, until at last the light of day began to streak the eastern skies: then their boat was skirting the shore to the northward. They paused at the mouth of a little

creek, near Croatan Bluff, and looked around upon the less dreary waters, but no signs of a boat were to be seen. What was to be done now? They doubted not but that they had been near the pursued at some time during the night,—but what of that? They believed that the fiends were now concealed at some point near them,—but where? There on their left was a great wilderness; for miles and miles and miles away reached the wild shores, where were little coves and bends and creeklets, and clustering vines and thick boughs that arched over the surface of the waters. Where should they go to find the boat, if indeed she were anywhere concealed on that wild shore? Then, suppose by accident they should find the boat? Might it not turn out that the ten desperadoes, when they should discover by the light of day the weakness of the pursuers, would willingly offer battle? But, again, suppose otherwise, and that they were still disposed to fly, how easy a matter it would be for them to leave their boat and escape in the great wilderness?

The case would, indeed, have been a hopeless one to men less determined and in earnest; and yet even upon their faces disappointment was visible, as they sat there with their oars drawn in across the gunwales, looking out upon the waters.

“The jig’s about up for this time,” said Len, “and it’s my belief there ain’t nothin’ that we can do now better than to run up into this creek and wait till night comes on again; then we can come out and drift about, and watch and listen. It’s my belief they’re hid somewheres close by, and if so be they is, we’ll be apt to come up by ’em when we drift about without any racket; for they’ll be sure to come out and make off somewheres when it comes on dark and they finds everything still.”

“Look up and down the shore, Len,” said Stäm. “S’posin they’re hid close by, like you thinks; ain’t they, as apt as any way, lookin’ out and watchin’ us this minit? And if so be they is, wouldn’t they see us move up the creek? and wouldn’t they watch all day to see if we come out? and would they forgit to watch when it comes on dark? It’s wide water here, Len, and, sure as you’re born, they’d pass us; for didn’t they move about still last night? Now I should say the best thing we could do would be to move over to the north end of the island, and stay there and watch all day. If so be that they are close

by, and can see us, when they sees us crossin' to the island they'll think like as anyway that we've give up the chase, and they'll be throwed off their guard. Then another thing: the island is five mile from here; we can run the boat in the sedge around the point and set there and watch this shore all day (for we can see a long stretch of it from there), and maybe so we shall see some signs of 'em even before night comes on."

"Stam's way is best," said Sol. "You see some of us can set over there in the sedge and watch, and some can be lookin' about on the island; for maybe, after all, they landed *there* last night."

"What do you think of it, cap'n?" Stam asked.

"I can only say, my generous friends," said Pierre, "that I will gladly follow wherever you think best to lead."

"I guess you're right, Stam," said Len. "Le's go."

In less time than an hour the party had landed at "North End," and concealed their boat behind the high sedge.

"Now," said Stam, "Sol is enough to set here in the sedge and watch; there's ten mile of the Croatan shore in sight, and all he'll have to do will be to look up and down, and he can do that about as well as twenty could. But, for what we know, it's like Sol said, a while ago,—maybe they did land on the island, sure 'nough; and if so be they did we shall catch 'em to-day, if we goes to work right, and my plan is that we three circle about, and if there's a stranger on the island we'll be apt to find it out."

All saw the wisdom of the proposition, and the three men started off, leaving Sol sitting in the sedge.

For hours Sol sat there on his lonely watch. Scenes of passing loveliness and splendor were spread out before him. It was one of those glorious mornings of mid October, when all nature seems to be telling of its great Author. Not a ruffle was on the glassy sound in any direction. The skies were cloudless, except that here and there were gauzy tufts and tresses of delicate cirrus of snowy whiteness, that seemed as pictures on the light-blue walls of the great dome. The sun had just arisen over the bald yellow hills of Nagshead, and was flooding his golden light on the visible world. Flocks of wild-fowl were sporting on the shoals, and other flocks were continually coming in from their far-away home among the icebergs of the north, and alighting on the glittering waters.

Some of these did nothing but sit and call to those that they saw hovering over the flood far away to come and partake of the rich feast; others were busy diving beneath the surface, and feeding on the luxuriant meadows beneath the waters. From southwest far to the northward stretched the curving shores of Croatan until they reached the Bluff, then they turned abruptly westward, and dwindled away to Durant's Island; then, as the eye circled still on northwardly, naught appeared but the broad Albemarle, bounded by skies of blue, until Powell's Point, Shellbank Point, Collington Island, and the long line of coast-reef, ending away to the southeastward in the golden-hued level of Body's Island, came in view.

That watchman's life had been a dreary one, indeed. Amidst scenes of trouble and turbulence it had its beginning; and never, though at times the pleasant sunlight gleamed upon it, had it been freed from the influences of the dark spirits that so often visited it. Ay, sunlight did at times come. At last the tempest's raging winds were lulled to sleep; but still the billows that the storm had raised continued to heave on high, and roll and crash and roar until again the tempest came. Bursts of unrestrained passion and scenes of brutal violence were familiar to him; and the teachings that he had received were, that the highest aims and aspirations of life were to gratify passion and to rule with brute hand.

But now, as he sat and looked out on the beautiful world before him, a heavenly being that had seldom before been his companion drew near,—angel Peace whispered to him of God and heaven.

The current of his thoughts began to glide through channels that had not been known until that angel came to point them out. He thought of his own recent acts,—of his assisting, at the risk of his life, to save the ship; he wondered at the lively interest he was feeling for the afflicted stranger,—and peace had come to bless him; for those acts were good. He thought, too, of Ike Drew, and of Jim Beam and Peggy Strubl, all of whom he had seen to pass into the dark world. They too had toiled and labored: one endless tempest had been their life,—darkest and wildest at the close. Ah, how rich the reward that he was now receiving for good acts,—the smiles of angel Peace!

Patiently the watchman sat there in the sedge; and faith-

fully he watched until the hour of noon had passed. The waters had continued sleek and bright until now, and not a boat had been seen. But now a breeze came fanning the rushes with its light wings; the pine-trees near began their moaning monotone, and waves came dancing upon the shore, surging and sighing as they came.

Sol was looking in the direction of the little creek near the bluff on the opposite shore, near the mouth of which he and his party had rested a time at the dawning of that morning, and there he saw a dark object that seemed to be moving out from shore. Now, as he sat shading his eyes with both his hands and gazing steadily, a white sail arose, and a little boat headed towards the bluff. There, without doubt, was the boat that they had been pursuing, coming out of the very creek at which they had rested. Oh, that Stam and his party would return now!

But hours passed; and all that Sol could do was to sit there and watch until that white sail had rounded the bluff and sunk lower and lower in the distance, until at last it disappeared altogether. Then came Stam and his party; but then the sun was sinking beneath the horizon.

Sol related what he had seen, and described the course taken by the boat. She had headed westward, hugging the land closely as she went.

"I'm afeered they've slipped us," said Len. "If we had more daylight before us we mought sight her yet; for by her huggin' the land so, I shouldn't wonder if she didn't aim to turn into the river. But it would be dark long before we could git to Durant's Island now; and if we should run into the river, we couldn't see nothin'."

"But the wind is fair," said Pierre, excitedly; "possibly by the use of both sail and oars we may get there in time."

"No," said Stam; "it would be good sailin' to take us to the west end of Durant's Island in two hours: but the wind's lullin' now, and it'll be dead calm in an hour. For all that, though, we can't do nothin' better than to push on, and take the wind as long as it blows."

The mast was then stepped, the main-sail and jib raised, and the little boat went bounding on toward the west end of Durant's Island.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE RAGGED PHILOSOPHER.

THE "Old Fort" on Roanoke Island is situated not far from the sound shore, between Shallowbag Bay and "North End." It is a mound in the form of a hollow square, measuring less than ten rods on a side, and surrounded by a trench; but mound and trench are at this day so near on a level with the surrounding lands that the passing stranger would not be apt to notice the existence of either, unless his attention should be specially directed towards them.

When first erected the embankment was eight feet high, and the trench around it six feet wide and about four deep; but Time, the great leveller, that putteth at naught the works of puny man,—that raiseth up and casteth down,—has had sole charge of the old fort for nearly three hundred years. No wonder, then, that it has almost disappeared; and no wonder that but little is left to distinguish the spot that it occupied from the wild jungle that surrounds it. Stunted live-oak and pine and tangled vines and gaulberry grow now in the trench and on the mound as they grow on every hand around; and only a trace remains to show that the hand of man was ever busy there.

The old fort was erected in the year 1586, by the one hundred and eight English emigrants who had landed from Sir Walter Raleigh's ships in the year before, as a protection for themselves and their scanty property against their neighbors, the savages, whom they had, for some cause or other, grossly offended.

The generally accepted tradition is, that the whole of these emigrants remained in the fort until Captain Drake, in 1587, sailed into the sound with his fleet and dropped anchor near by, and at their earnest entreaties took them all on board his vessels and carried them back to England. But there are those who contend that only a few of the one hundred and

eight ever succeeded in getting back to their native land. These assert that there were dissensions and quarrelling among the emigrants themselves, and that the greater number of them left the fort, and were never after heard of; and that it was but a tithe of them that were remaining in it when Drake came. Others again, who accept this latter tradition in part, say that those who went out from the fort crossed over to Powell's Point, twelve miles to the northward of the island, and there cleared and cultivated the lands; that they continued to dwell there in peace and quiet; and that their descendants still reside there and in the vicinity. But it is a historical fact that Drake did visit the island with his fleet in the year 1587, and that he received on board of his vessels all, or all that remained, of the one hundred and eight, and sailed with them back to England.

If Stam and Len and Pierre, on the morning that they left Sol sitting in the sedge at the North End, keeping a lookout in the direction of Croatan for the boat that they had been pursuing the night before, had chosen, when they got opposite the old fort, to turn aside to the left out of the main path and push their way a few hundred yards through the thick growth to it, they would have seen sitting on the embankment, with his back leaning against a little oak, and his feet inside the fort, an old, gray-haired man, dressed from head to foot in a suit of untanned skins, and wearing a bear-skin cap and a pair of rudely-made shoes of the same material.

Long before the dawning of day that old man went there and seated himself, and leaned his back against the oak and went to sleep. And though it was early morning when he awoke, he changed not his position in the least, but continued to sit there with his arms folded upon his breast, his head bowed, and his eyes bent upon the ground. The sun arose and ascended higher and higher in the quiet blue skies, until little streams of the golden light came slanting and glinting through the tree-tops upon his queer figure; yet all the time he continued to sit there, looking down to the ground near his feet, and thinking, thinking, thinking. Not once fell his arms from their fold on his breast; not once raised he his bowed head.

The sun had passed meridian. His rays, that had come at first and fallen like a delicate veil of gold upon the back of

the old man's cap, gradually passed up to the top of it, gradually passed over it toward the front, and now they fell in rich sprays here and there upon the capacious brim. It may be that they would have continued to slant more and more from westward, until the blue eyes beneath the brim should be reached and illumined to their depths, had there not been a quick rustle among the bushes near by as of one approaching through them. This snapped the long chain of thought; and the old man's head was raised in time to see the thick clustering growth before him part here and there, and a man as old as himself come through and halt at the distance of a few feet from him.

The new-comer, who was barefoot, bareheaded, and dressed in dingy tatters from his ankles to his shoulders, started slightly when his eyes met those of the old man who sat on the mound, and for some moments he stood silently returning the silent inquiries that came. But at last he broke forth in a laugh that rang and echoed through the still woods.

"Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! Bless my life! I am very, very, very glad that you have come at last! indeed, I am; very, very, very glad! I have been coming here regularly once a day, day after day, ever since Lucifer Grindle told me of the existence and history of this fort, and showed me the way in to it. I have known for some time past that you were coming, and so I have repeatedly told the rude people who dwell hereabout, but I have discovered from their manner of late that they are fast losing faith in my prophecy; nay, I know that they begin to regard me as a visionary,—I may say a lunatic! Whenever I have told them of late that your advent was near at hand they were sure to laugh,—the most ignorant of them in my face; and some have gone so far as to call me a fool. But I have been very patient, for I knew better than they did, and remembering what Epictetus said,—‘Speak not of your theorems to the unlearned;’ ‘Entice not the man who cannot swim into deep water,’—I adopted a wiser course than I had before practised,—namely, to endeavor continually to add to my store of wisdom, and to speak as little as possible to others of my gainings. So you see that even these rude people have taught me wisdom. It is a poor school indeed that teaches nothing to the willing inquirer. Now, I have it in my power to teach them in return; no doubt

they will be quick enough now to change their minds and admit that I am a true prophet.

“I must confess that many a time my patience has been put to a severe test; so severe, indeed, that upon several occasions I have been on the very eve of committing suicide (aye, sir, *of committing suicide*, that most unnatural of crimes!), and so, at one stroke, of ridding myself of earthly trouble and vexation. But it has always happened that I failed to carry the terrible resolution into effect, as you see, and that I have always reconsidered the matter upon second, and I must say wiser, thought.

“One week ago, I actually hung myself by the neck to that very limb that reaches there over your head—*hung myself by the neck, sir!*—and this was the way of it: I came here in one of my fits of deepest despondency, and climbed into the tree, with the full, cool knowledge of what I was doing, got astraddle of that limb, fastened the end of the rope that I had along with me to it, made a noose in the other end of the rope that would slip just *so far* and no farther, passed this noose over my head, and found that it was a tolerable fit for my neck; and then I very carefully let myself down until I was suspended by the neck! *suspended by the neck, sir!*

“Never before had thoughts passed through my mind so rapidly. I had not been hanging in this way more than half a minute, when a rabbit, that came leaping through the bushes, squatted immediately before me, and almost popped her great eyes out of her head staring up into my face. At first I imagined that she had come to sympathize with me, but it was not long before my mind changed; and then I imagined that I could see her mouth pucker up as if she were laughing. So furious I became at the thought of being derided by so miserable a little creature as a rabbit that I reached up my hands over my head, grasped the rope, and lifted myself clear; which done, I kicked at the wretch with my right foot with all my might. The rabbit was so astonished at this sudden movement of mine that she made a back somersault fully three feet high, and immediately vanished. I then drew into my lungs a good supply of fresh air, and again carefully let myself down. I had been hanging this second time, say half a minute, when Josephus came up with the most woe-begone expression of countenance that it has

ever been my misfortune to look upon,—but I must tell you who Josephus is.

“Josephus is Lucifer Grindle’s dog. He is a remarkable animal in appearance and otherwise. His color is a smoky piebald, and he is lean, lank, hairless, warty, long-bodied, and crooked-legged; besides this, he has a very round head, and an unusually long and bushy tail. His manner of walking is different from that of any other dog that I have ever seen,—it is this: he starts by first stepping out his right forefoot; this is followed by his right hindfoot; then his left forefoot, followed by his left hindfoot; and so on, as far as he may go, every step seeming to be the measurement of an exact distance. This is his usual style of locomotion; but upon rare occasions he gets off into a jog, which may continue while he is going the distance of five rods, and then he is sure to return to his natural gait. (It is natural for Josephus to walk.) His head and tail are ever drooping, let the gait be what it may, which gives him a very odd appearance, especially when the crooked legs are taking him in a jog. No, he never raises his head; nor do I believe that anything could induce him to do it. I tried him once, by standing in front of him and putting a bone that he knew I intended for him on the top of my head. He rolled his eyes up at it until there were only little streaks of black on the tops of them, but he didn’t raise his head a hairbreadth. I verily believe that if I had been a foot taller, his eyes would have been as white as snowballs. I had a great disgust for the dog from the first, and I let no occasion pass without giving him to understand, as plainly as I was able, that I abhorred him; but, in spite of this, he took up so unaccountable a fancy for me that, wherever I might turn, he was sure to be at my heels; and he would follow me for miles, a thing that he was never known to do to another. However I might go about to avoid him, or whatever might be my plans to dodge him, I can safely say that I never succeeded once. *Never once, sir!* Many a bright morning, when I have felt in a meditative humor, I have sneaked out of the back door, and over the back fence, and roundabout through the woods to the road, but when at the very height of lofty contemplation, I have happened to glance back, there was sure to be Josephus within a rod of me, wagging his tail from side to side slowly, and looking as if he would give the whole world

to be able to smile ! I have tried to escape him in other ways. Knowing his great aversion to jogging, I have, many a time, turned abrupt bends in the path, when I would observe that he was weary and lagging behind, and run on at full speed ; but as soon as he would turn the bend and discover how I had advanced, tired as he might be he would get into a jog, and, between walking and jogging, would come up again after a while. Once I left the house and came to the road by the back way (I left Josephus fast asleep), and ran for three miles without stopping once. I was so sure that time that I was safe that I forgot all about the dog. It was a fair spring morning, and I sat down under the branches of a tree and began writing poetry. I had written five lines and had my eyes turned up to the blue sky arranging the sixth, when I was startled at hearing a doleful wail near by : suddenly my eyes dropped from the sky and glanced in the direction from whence the wail had come, and there was Josephus ! The affectionate creature, though jaded by the severe exercise that he had taken, could not refrain from expressing his joy at overtaking me by the most melancholy howls that could be thought of.

“ But I was telling you about hanging myself. As I said, I had been hanging the second time about half a minute. My head was pushed to one side by the knot in the noose ; my tongue was hanging several inches out of my mouth, and my eyes were protruding fearfully, when Josephus came and sat on his haunches within a yard of my toes ; then forthwith he set up the most diabolical howl that my ears ever listened to. I am inclined now to believe that my sense of hearing then was more than ordinarily acute ; for the sounds seemed to be as loud and sharp as the noise that would be made by the striking at the same instant of forty brass pans with forty iron hammers. Never before had such savage anger entered my heart ! Weak as I was, I raised my right hand, and beckoned him away ; but he only rolled his solemn, leaden eyes up at my face, and howled louder if possible than at first. The furious passion that raged in my bosom gave me new strength. I reached up again for the rope, raised myself with difficulty, slipped the noose over my head, and fell heavily to the ground in a state of semi-unconsciousness. Josephus was eagerly watching my every movement, and when he saw me

fall he set up such a devilish wailing that I fainted outright before he got through with it. I am sure now that that last howl was an expression of his great joy at my deliverance, for when I came to the poor creature was sitting at my head licking my face. But he no sooner saw my eyes open than he arose and waddled away to the distance of twenty feet or so, and again sat down and howled. So indignant was I at the whole proceeding that I determined to climb the tree again, and to spring this time from the limb, and so break my neck at once. But, after repeated efforts, I found that I was too weak to climb; so I laid myself down at the root of the tree, and slept for two long hours.

"I awoke in a better frame of mind; and, instead of hanging myself again, I concluded that I would return home to dinner, for I had become quite hungry. Poor old Josephus! I shall respect and love him as long as I live for the good service he did me; for I am now here alive, and a joyous witness of your coming, sir! Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! Dear doctor! I am very, very, very, very glad! Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!"

"Sir," said the old man, who had all the time continued to sit upon the mound listening in astonishment to the strange harangue, "you are, without doubt, mistaken as to who I am. I am no doctor, but a poor——"

"I know,—I know very well!" said the other. "Really, doctor, you are very modest. But I am not surprised at that, for a truly great man is sure to be modest. Modesty, if I may so speak, is one of the cardinal elements of greatness; therefore, the man that lacks it is not great. Bless me, how glad, how rejoiced I am at your coming! I shall never cease to love Josephus, and henceforth I intend to share my breakfast, dinner, and supper with him!"

"Indeed, sir," persisted the old man, as he pushed up his cap-brim, so as to expose his whole face to view, and arose to his feet. "*You are mistaken!* I tell you I am not the person that you seem to think I am, but only a poor, unfortunate castaway, that——"

"Exactly!" interrupted the other, smiling strangely as he spoke; "exactly, doctor! I understand! Ay, indeed, for I, too, am a poor, unfortunate castaway! But please do me the honor, great man, to confide in me! I assure you, you shall have no cause for regret. I, sir, am the philosopher Socrates,

Junior! Though far from being presumptuous enough to set myself up as your *equal*, yet I humbly pray that you will do me the honor to recognize me as your admiring pupil, and to allow my name to be on the list of your humble servants. We are equally unfortunate in one respect,—that is, in having been born ages ahead of our time. I say *unfortunate*, for I honestly believe that it is as great a disadvantage to be born *ahead* of, as *behind* the age. You were born *centuries* before your time. I, *ages* before mine. We are both great sufferers by it. A man ahead of his age is set down in the list of visionaries; the finger of contempt is pointed at him by every dolt that he meets; and even urchins laugh and yell as they stop before him, and ask him to build them a grand castle in the air. He is regarded as a lunatic, when in reality he may be hundreds of years in advance of the poor fools who gibe at him, and imagine themselves to be far wiser than he is,—simply because they have not the capacity to understand what he advances.

“Now what do you imagine Augustus Cæsar—learned and polite as he was—would have thought of Galileo and Newton, if they had lived in his age and attempted to teach their philosophy to him? I imagine he would have sat and listened patiently and respectfully to *one* lecture from each of them; then, immediately after they had got through, he would have called an officer to take them out and crucify them, without another word. Of course he would! No doubt in the world of it!

“Then go back to the infancy of poesy. Was poor old Homer appreciated while he lived? I should say that his case was about like this: He was a decrepit old man, stone blind, poor, ragged, very probably filthy in appearance (filthy from *necessity*, of course). He eked out a miserable existence, walking around the country, led by a little dog, and very probably himself leading a monkey. Wherever the *sensible* little dog sees two or more individuals gathered together, thither he leads the willing old man, and thither the old man leads the monkey. Now I shall not raise the question at this time whether that little dog is acting from a sense of duty to his poor old master, or because experience has taught him that he will be pretty sure to get a bone by going. We will say that the dog’s motives are purely selfish,—that is to say, he goes expecting to get a bone for himself. Well, the trio go up to the waiting

group; the dog sits upon his haunches and looks up into the people's faces, pleading all the time as eloquently as eyes can plead for a bone. If this manner of pleading fails, he begins whining and wagging his tail until he makes himself understood: then a bone is brought and is tossed to him: he catches it in his mouth, then eases himself down on his belly and fore-knees, turns his head sideways, with one eye toward the ground the other toward the sky,—both eyes being half closed now,—and goes vigorously at his gnawing. The monkey (who would like also to have his breakfast) approaches near to the dog, and makes a great many comical grimaces. The dog observing this, and having his own suspicions, ceases an instant to gnaw, opens wide his eyes, and casts fierce glances at the monkey, grinning horribly as he does so. The monkey, that has upon several occasions before, and under exactly similar circumstances, been severely bitten by that same dog, leaps away back, to the very extent of his chain, and then tries his best to look precisely like the devil,—in the vain hope that by so doing he may frighten the dog, and cause him to drop his bone and shrink away; but so far from that, the dog gnaws with twice the energy and earnestness that he did before, seeming utterly to have forgotten that there ever existed in the world such a thing as a monkey.

“During this whole time the sad-faced old man is rolling his sightless eyes about in every direction, except toward the strings over which his nimble fingers are dancing, and the people are almost cracking their sides *laughing at the antics of the monkey and the little dog*. The old man is singing one of the sweet songs of his own composition, and has almost got to the end of it before the people are aware that he has even commenced. And when at last they turn from the monkey, they see that tears are trickling from those sightless eyes down the grizzly beard. Some one of the group, then, supposing that the old man is weeping because he is hungry, goes and gets for him some bread and milk. He takes and eats it. Then the trio pass on in search of another group, while those who are left behind laugh heartily, and tell one another of this and that funny caper of the dog and monkey.

“After a few years the old man is missed; he ceases to make his periodical round, and inquiries are made, for the people wish to see the monkey again. But the poor old poet

died a year ago, and was buried no one knows where; rumor says he was buried by one who took the dog and monkey for his pains. . . . Five hundred years rolled away; then arose the anxious inquiry, Where is Homer? Ah! who can tell where that man is who was born five hundred years before his time? Homer lived; he is dead: the sweet music that he sang is still heard,—but where, where is the singer?

“Now, Doctor Skyelake, let us look at your case. The world suffered you to pass through life and die without taking the trouble to inquire who you were; and yet, in my estimation (I am not a flatterer, sir), you were the greatest man, by odds, that ever lived in it. Again, look at *me*! I sometimes sit down beside Josephus and imagine that my case and Homer’s are much the same. How? We were born before our time!

“Allow me to assure you, my dear sir, that no man has ever been so welcome to this island as you are! In the name of every dweller upon it, I welcome you and offer you its hospitalities! My abiding-place is not far distant from here. I humbly crave the honor of your presence at it. Lucifer Grindle and his wife, Comfort, are among the very best and kindest people that I have ever met. I dwell with them. They are, it is true, rude and ignorant; but they are a peaceful, quiet, contented old couple, that enjoy life with as pleasant a relish as the richest. Come, go with me to their house. I know they will welcome you with open arms; and, besides, I cannot consent to be separated from you a single day during your stay here. Yes, doctor; you will find that Lucifer and Comfort will gladly divide their last morsel with you. They are, I believe, the kind of people that go to heaven when they leave earth.”

During this strange harangue, the old man of the bear-skin cap made twenty attempts to speak, but Socrates’ words poured forth in one unbroken stream, and the whole twenty attempts amounted to no more than the snap of one’s finger; so at last he pulled the brim of his cap down over his forehead again, crossed his arms on his breast, and waited patiently.

Socrates at last ceased speaking and took three steps in the direction of the main path, looking back at the old man all the time with an expression on his face that said, Come, let us go now to Lucifer Grindle’s. But when he saw no signs of

his coming, he wheeled around and halted. "Venerated, respected, and profound sir!" he said, humbly bowing, "will you deign to go with me to the house of my esteemed friends, Lucifer and Comfort Grindle?"

"My friend," said the old man, "I have made twenty several attempts to speak, but could not be heard. I have no objection to go with you,—nay, I would be pleased to do so; but I must disabuse your mind. I repeat then, positively, I am not the person you take me to be; I am no Doctor Skyelake! Look straight at me and you will discover your mistake."

"Mistake!" said Socrates. "Is the sun shining, doctor?"

"Yes," the old man replied; "the sun is shining, and you are mistaken."

"Excuse me!" said Socrates, profoundly bowing. "If I am mistaken, then the sun is not shining; if the sun is shining, then I am not mistaken. Excuse me, respected sir! I would not speak so positively if I were not absolutely certain that my assertion is correct."

So puzzled was the old man now that for some moments he knew not what to say. Finally he asked, "Will you be kind enough to tell me who this Doctor Skyelake is? For I pledge you my word as an honest man I never even so much as heard the name of Skyelake before since I have been a living being!"

Socrates stared into the old man's face. If eyes have a language his had a great deal to say on that occasion. First, they exclaimed, Great man, do you take me to be a fool? Then they said, Wait, wait: there may be something about this matter that I do not yet fully comprehend; for great men are apt to speak in riddles, sure enough. Wait, and let me think! It is remarkable, Doctor Skyelake, that you should have forgotten who you are! A new idea then popped into the mind of Socrates, and his first utterance thereafter was a loud and protracted laugh. When that had ended, he said,—

"Excuse me—excuse me, my dear sir! Come to think of it, it is reasonable enough and natural enough that a man who has been dead and buried for upwards of two hundred years should forget—yes, *even his own name*. Doctor Skyelake, sir

(and you are that individual), was a profound scientist and savant of the sixteenth century. He was English by birth, but a citizen of the round world. You may recollect that Philip Amidas and Arthur Barlow, in the year 1585, brought to this island a colony of one hundred and eight persons (no one believes the fable that Ralph Lane brought them and landed them at Shallowbag Bay). One hundred and seven of these emigrants brought with them the most extravagant expectations. They had no doubt but that America was a solid block of gold, or at any rate so thick as to make it a necessity to bore down a mile and a half before striking the water springs. One of that colony was too wise a man to take up a notion so ridiculous. That one was yourself. That *one* was the intimate friend of both Amidas and Barlow; he came solely for the purpose of making scientific investigation.

“Since the discoveries of Christopher Columbus and others, and up to the time I am speaking of (1585), the scientific mind of Europe had been greatly exercised upon the subject of the *earth's motions*. The whole world (if I may so speak) had been *driven* into the belief that this earth is a rotund body. But still, many doubted of the *diurnal and annual revolutions*. The majority contended that these revolutions, from the very nature of things, were beyond question, as even the most ignorant ought to be able to see and understand. But the minority asked the majority a great number of puzzling questions: among others, ‘How is it with the sun, moon, and stars? What are you going to do with them? Surely their rising, passing over, and setting is not merely *apparent*?’ Then, as to the yearly motion, they asked, ‘Who shall say, with any show of reason, that the ecliptic is not the path of the sun instead of the earth?—for certainly the sun at one time is away yonder, south of the equator, and at another, away yonder, north of it. Does not the sun move back and forth across the equator?’ Again, the majority contended that the sun is nearest the earth in winter. This appeared so ridiculous in the eyes of the minority that they laughed, and called that theory a lame stick to lean upon.

“But there was afterwards a third party to arise (weak in numbers it is true, but strong in intellect), who stood between the majority and minority; these agreed to some extent with both the others, and to some extent differed from both of

them. They admitted that the earth revolved upon its axis daily; that at certain seasons the sun was *above* the equator, and at other times he was *below* it; and yet they were far from admitting that this earth is a perfect sphere, or anything approaching it. Nor did they admit the correctness of the theory of the centripetal and centrifugal forces; nor would they by any means admit that the earth was continually circling around the sun. They held that the earth is not a sphere, for, that if it were, the south pole would point continually to the sun, upon the centripetal and centrifugal theory. Why? Is there not more land north of the equator than south of it? Is not land *heavier* than water? Is not then the northern hemisphere heavier than the southern? Would not the repelling (centrifugal) force acting upon a body so unevenly weighted throw the heavy end outward? and would not that keep the south pole toward the sun, and the north pole away from it? What (this middle party asked) would be the working of a balance-wheel one-half the circumference of which should weigh five hundred pounds, and the other half four hundred?

"Now Doctor Skyelake was the great front leader of this middle class of philosophers, and his visit to America with Amidas and Barlow was, as has been said, to make scientific investigations,—principally, investigations that might settle these matters of dispute.

"His first work was to weigh the Western Hemisphere. This he did successfully. He had previously weighed the Eastern. Upon comparing the weights, *he found that the Western was seventeen ounces avoirdupois the lighter*. But even the seventeen ounces he had no doubt came from errors in calculation; indeed, so well satisfied he was of this, that he announced to the world the astounding fact that the two hemispheres were *exactly* poised, and it was only to his most intimate friends that he made any mention of the matter of the seventeen ounces.

"This was in exact accordance with Doctor Skyelake's PEAR THEORY, which is this:

"The earth that we inhabit is pear-shaped, not spherical,—the grandest, simplest theory ever promulged! and yet it is but the announcement of a self-evident truth. Sir, I never think of the originator of that glorious theory, the founder of

that grand school of philosophy, but that I am lost in wonder, astonished at the profundity of that noble specimen of the genus homo—Doctor Skyelake!

“The earth, said that great man, is of the shape of a perfect pear, or of an inflated balloon. But that is by no means all:—this great pear is made up of smaller ones; *it is a bunch of pears in the shape of a pear!* Imagine that we have a map of the world spread out before us: look! What is the shape of North America?—a pear. What is the shape of South America?—a pear. What is the shape of Africa?—a pear. What are Greenland? Arabia? Norway and Sweden? Hindostan? Florida? Lower California? Kamtchatka? Sumatra? They are pears! How are they hanging in the great bunch?—with their stems to the south and their big ends to the north! Wonderful! wonderful! And this earth is a pear, composed of pears whose stems are to the south! That this earth is a pear there can be no doubt!—none!

“I have said that the school of Doctor Skyelake admitted the diurnal revolution: it admitted also that that motion is caused by certain *forces* acting upon the earth. Certainly! for how could there be *motion* without *force*? Yet that school rejected the centripetal and centrifugal theory. So do I. Why? Because such a theory is nonsense! It may do for the sciolist who goes skimming over the surface of things; but true philosophy reaches away down under the surface.

“Take a strip of sheet-tin, bend it around spirally, and make of it a figure to resemble the shape of a pear; punch a little hole in the exact centre of the upper (larger) end of the figure, put a string through the hole and secure it there. Let the string be, say, six feet long; tie the other end of it to a rod, take it to a stream of clear water, and let the tin down into the water the full length of the line; then lift it up gradually to the surface. The tin, as it is raised, will whirl in the direction of the bend of the strip fast or slow, depending upon the *force* exerted to raise it. Now hang a weight beneath the tin figure and raise it through the water as before: still it will revolve, but less rapidly, unless greater force is exerted to raise it. Now, two forces act upon the earth *in the same manner*, one tending to raise it, the other to draw it down, but the *raising* force is greatest. What are those forces? What produces them? There can be no answer

until science may see fit to speak. We only know that such forces exist.

"But, asks the skeptic, what will you say about the circuit of the earth,—its orbit? Only that there is no such thing! The earth has no orbit; it is forever *ascending*; the sun, moon, and stars are ascending also,—the earth steadily and at the same rate of speed forever, while the sun, moon, and stars go pulsing up. During one-half the year they rise at a comparatively slow rate, and during the other half they shoot up with wonderful speed to a height far above the earth; then at a certain height their speed decreases, so that the earth not only comes up even with them, but continues to a great height above them. And so they are forever rising and forever keeping company. Now, Mr. Skeptic, what is further to be said about *circuit*, and *orbit*, and *ecliptic*? Are they not accounted for? But is it so wonderful that the world should be flying *up* instead of *around*? Everything that is great, or grand, or noble is eternally tending upward. Science, art, mind, intellect, all are advancing, progressing, rising,—revolving, it is true, but *rising*. Grand, beautiful, glorious theory, Doctor Skyelake!—grand, indeed!"

The old man whom Socrates persisted in addressing as *Doctor Skyelake* had again seated himself on the mound before this lengthiest of all the harangues was half finished. There he sat with folded arms as before, and leaning back against the tree, now staring in great astonishment into the earnest speaker's face.

"Yes, great and noble philosopher," Socrates again began, "to *you* the world is indebted for the grand PEAR THEORY! Sir! again I welcome you to this island; aye, verily I welcome you to this very spot where the great truth was fully revealed to you; for it was here, within this little square of ten rods, that you wrote out that famous theory that caused the heart of the world to thrill and throb for joy!"

"Really, sir," said Doctor Skyelake, "I had forgotten it all."

"No wonder, no wonder!" said Socrates; "for it was upwards of two hundred years ago that you were buried beneath the very spot upon which you now sit."

"Buried?" said Doctor Skyelake; "I had forgotten that too."

"No wonder, no wonder!" said Socrates; "much may be forgotten in two centuries!"

"Will you be so kind as to give me an account of my death and burial, sir? I have no doubt you are fully informed about it."

"With great pleasure," Socrates answered. "After you and the other emigrants had quarrelled with the savages, this fort was constructed; and you with the others came into it, where you could safely act upon the defensive. The fierce chief of the savages (Chickimicomocachie by name) vowed to his deity (a red-headed snake) that he would take your life (for the savages feared you more than the whole one hundred and seven), and the treacherous villain *did* slay you before he rested. It was midnight; you were sitting where you now do, looking up at the moon, and busily engaged calculating the quantity of heat that comes to earth with its light in an hour, when the wretch crept up behind you and laid open your head from the top of it to your neck with one stroke of his stone-axe, and then ran away. When those in the fort awaked on the next morning and discovered what had been done, they wept during two whole days and nights, and then buried you. That occurred in the autumn of 1586. I suppose the whole affair has passed from your mind?"

"As entirely," Doctor Skyelake answered, "as if it had never been there."

"No wonder," said Socrates, "no wonder; for, if memory dwells in the brain (and I suppose it does), the stroke made by the great stone-axe of Chickimicomocachie, that divided your brain, divided also your memory; and a memory cut into piecemeal would be, I should say, but little better than no memory."

"I should say, sir," said Doctor Skyelake, "that you are not only an intelligent and learned man, but that you have a remarkable recollection of things."

Socrates stepped back and made a profound bow. "I have a *fair* memory," he said; "and, as for learning and intelligence, I can say (not desiring to be vain or boastful, for I hope I have modesty also) that I have written forty-nine books on different subjects, each book averaging about three hundred pages, say fifteen thousand pages in all." He then made another profound bow and stood, holding his hands behind him, respectfully silent.

"Indeed!" exclaimed Doctor Skyelake. "Forty-nine books,

averaging more than three hundred pages ! What an immense work for one mind ! Will you be so kind as to name some of the subjects ?—philosophical, generally, I should suppose ?”

“ Altogether so,” said Socrates, again bowing. “ Nineteen are explanatory of your Pear Theory, sir ; seven upon the character, properties, accidents, effects, and uses of yon brilliant lamp that hangs from the ceiling of the great rotunda, pouring its effulgent floods abroad and rendering glorious the visible *Cosmos*. But, bless me ! the sun has set, and shades are beginning to gather around us. Come, my dear doctor, let us go now, and more of what we were speaking at another time.”

CHAPTER XXV.

A SOCIABLE TIME AT LUCIFER'S HOUSE.

DOCTOR SKYELAKE made no answer ; and instead of arising from his seat and starting off toward the house of Lucifer and Comfort Grindle, he only crossed his legs, pulled the brim of his cap farther down over his eyes, and hung his head lower, deeply meditating.

“ Come, come, profound sir !” said the impetuous Socrates ; “ let us be going. You see it is growing dark under these trees already. Let us go on and reach the house before night.”

Saying these words, he grasped the old man's coat-sleeve firmly at the left elbow and gently drew him up and on after him. Doctor Skyelake went on through the bushes toward the main path, half involuntarily as it were ; for, though he in no manner resisted or hung stubbornly back, yet he went as one who was by no means acting for himself,—as one who submitted to be led along by another without at the same time permitting the chain of his own deep thoughts to be broken by anything that might be taking place.

“ There,” said Socrates, after they had been on the way ten minutes, “ we are now in the path, and there are no more thick bushes to push through. Lucifer's house is now about a half-mile distant ; and we shall yet reach it before night, for you see it is already much lighter since we have got out from

under the trees. No doubt, doctor, this name *Lucifer* sounds strangely in your ears, as it did in mine at first, and you may imagine that the man was so named from a supposed resemblance, either in personal appearance or character, to the original LUCIFER; but not so, for he is as plain, blunt, ignorant, generous a fellow as you ever saw, and one that in no manner resembles that artful, sneaking hypocrite who inhabits the infernal regions. His wife Comfort, too, is a kind, good soul, who wishes harm to no one. I am very sure that you will be pleased with both of them when you come to find how generous and unassuming they are. Rude and ignorant though they be, they are the only people upon this whole island who appreciate or at all understand me. I have repeatedly told them about you,—who you were, when you lived, who it was that murdered you, and when your sad death occurred. At times, too, I have attempted to give them an understanding of the Pear Theory; but I am sorry to say they do not seem to feel any interest whatever in that noble subject, and that they invariably go to sleep before I have talked to them five minutes upon it. I have told them that you would shortly arise from your grave, and that I should have the honor of presenting them to you, and they have not doubted a single word that I have told them. Oh, venerated philosopher, you can have no idea of the joy that your coming at this opportune time affords me! But yonder is the house: and see! Lucifer and his wife are sitting in the door, smoking their pipes."

Doctor Skyelake lifted his cap-brim, raised his eyes from the ground, and looked out before him for the very first time since he had left the fort. All along Socrates had been leading him by the elbow; and all along he had been deeply, profoundly meditating,—turning over in his mind this and that thing, and trying to determine the best course for him to pursue under the circumstances. No doubt but Socrates was some insane person who had been wrecked at some time, and by chance had strayed over on the island; and yet it might be that to follow an insane man, as he was doing, would result in good; at any rate it was not probable that matters would be made worse than they already were with him, for he himself was an utter stranger there, the night before being the very first time that he had ever set foot on Roanoke Island. Possibly this accidental stumbling upon a lunatic was the very

best thing that could have happened for him : it might assist him in carrying out his own plans,—he truly hoped it would. But were there really such persons living on the island as Lucifer Grindle and his wife Comfort Grindle ? If there were, were they the kind, generous people that Socrates represented them to be ? It might be so, but it would not be wise to rely too implicitly upon the word of a lunatic. That lunatic, it might be, was leading him on and on, himself knew not whither. But, let it be as it might, he would go on, for he knew of nothing better to do than to follow his strange companion and ascertain the truth of the matter for himself. If it should turn out that what he had said about Lucifer and Comfort was true, it might be well to fall in with his conceits and agree with him in everything, and act as if he were indeed the great philosopher Doctor Skyelake, as it was insisted he should be, and let his memory be refreshed by Socrates of the occurrences of the very distant past ; for that strange man's imagination and voluble tongue, together with the fact that he himself was a practised ventriloquist, would enable him, in all probability, to carry on the deception successfully ; and possibly that deception might be applied to excellent uses.

"Do you not see them ?" said Socrates, pointing towards the door.

"Indeed I do !" said Doctor Skyelake, in the manner and tone of happy surprise. "Well, well ! How well I remember their great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-grand-fathers and grandmothers ! Well, well, well, well, well ! And what a striking resemblance to the old people !"

"So you are coming to your recollection !" said Socrates, delightedly, at the same time bounding a foot and a half up into the air for joy. "And you recollect their ancestors ? Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha ! Oh, bless me ! And you are coming to your recollection !"

Both Lucifer and his wife took their pipes from their mouths and held them in their right hands, and looked up when they heard Socrates's hearty laugh.

"Hanged, Comfort," said Lucifer, "if he ain't got the old feller along, sure 'nough ! Did you ever see sich a beard ? He can stuff the eends of it in his britches pockets !"

"And what long white hair hangin' over his shoulders ! And what comical clo's he's got on !" said Comfort. "Lucifer,

I'm afeerd o' dead folks; allus was! I'm goin' round to the back side o' the house a spell."

"That'll make it wuss for you, if he means harm," said Lucifer, with a shudder. "I guess maybe Socrates can manage him!"

"Lucifer," said Socrates, whose face was pictured all over with joyous smiles, "can you tell me who this is that comes with me? Hear his reply, Doctor Skyelake."

"I know, if *he* don't," said Comfort; "it's Doctor Skye-lake,—him that the Injun killed."

"That's it!" said Lucifer.

"Exactly!" said Socrates. "Did you observe, doctor?"

"That's just who it is!" said a voice that seemed to be rising up from under the ground.

"O Lord!" exclaimed Comfort, as she arose and started off towards the rear of the house. "I forgot to fetch up a pail o' water, and I must go git it before night comes on!"

"Wait!" said Lucifer, as he started off after his wife. "I'll go help you!"

The fact is, they only wanted an excuse to run back and hide in the woods.

"Come back, both of you, and sit down in that door again, for nothing shall hurt you!" said the underground voice.

They both returned with some precipitation, and seated themselves as they had been; then they looked up in silence at the old man: Comfort, through eyes no larger than black-eyed peas, and Lucifer through great round eyes that protruded like a buck's.

"Come into the house, venerated philosopher," said Socrates, with a bow and smile. "You see, Lucifer," he continued, "I have been telling you that this great man would come. You and Comfort alone of all the islanders believed me: *here he is!*"

"Do you ever *eat*?" asked Comfort, in a tremulous voice; "if you does, there's bread and taters and fish and meat in the pan there on the table, and honey in the bowl: take hold and help yourself."

"I never refuse to eat," answered Doctor Skyelake (who indeed was very hungry), "when by so doing I can give pleasure to kind friends."

This was said in so gentle and pleasant a manner that

Comfort smiled, and her eyes opened to their natural size. Lucifer also took heart, and his eyes settled down to a natural state; indeed, so great was his relief that he seated himself on a stool in the corner of the chimney, raked his pipe in the hot ashes, and went to smoking again.

"Eat, eat, dear sir," said Socrates; "we are all friends here!"

Doctor Skyelake, without waiting for further invitation, seated himself at the little pine-board table that sat on the floor, with his face toward the fireplace, and began to eat very heartily; while Socrates (who knew what good breeding was) stepped to the rear of the great man and stood leaning against the door-post, smiling happily all the time. Comfort also stood behind the doctor; but she, never having had the advantages of instruction in the polite proprieties, did nothing but stoop forward looking over his shoulders, greatly wondering at the hearty manner spirits have of eating fish and potatoes. Lucifer, whose seat was in front of the guest, did nothing but puff away at his pipe and gaze into the strange face, utterly forgetful of the existence of everything and every person in the world except Doctor Skyelake.

Lucifer's temperament was by no means nervous, and yet he could not now for his life keep his thoughts within their proper bounds; for no sooner had the singular being before him begun to eat than they broke loose and went scampering here and there and everywhere in the wildest manner: there was no use trying to hold them in, so he only sat puffing his pipe three times as rapidly as usual, and let them scamper.

Not a word had been said, until Lucifer (who had, as has been said, forgotten everything) addressed himself to the resurrected philosopher in this blunt manner: "Where has you been all this long time?"

There was a curiously shaped potato in the pan that sat on the table before the doctor; it had four prongs somewhat resembling the feet and arms of a person, and a little knob on top, that any one of quick imagination would have said without hesitation was exactly like a man's head, eyes, nose, mouth, and all. The doctor was looking down into the pan, and this singular shaped potato answered the question that Lucifer asked:

"In my skin!"

"Lucifer! Lucifer!" said Socrates, reproachfully. "You must not ask questions of this great man in so blunt a manner. Be more respectful, friend, in both manner and tone. Do you know that the individual whom you address so familiarly has the power, if he should choose to exert it, to sweep us all away in a whirlwind as quick as you can snap your fingers? You have been properly and truthfully answered; but ask no more such ridiculous questions, or he may at the very least fly away and leave us, which I should regard as a very sad misfortune."

Again Lucifer raked his pipe in the ashes and brought the stem to his lips, but all the time continuing to stare wildly into the stranger's face.

"Think there's any harm in him?" asked Comfort, in a low whisper, of Socrates.

The old man, who, from the time he took his seat at the table, had been looking down, eating fish after fish and potato after potato, and apparently paying no attention whatever to anything that was going on around him, turned his eyes again to the man-potato; and it answered Comfort's question before Socrates could even open his mouth.

"No, no, no! Not the least bit of harm,—no more than there is in *me*,—so long as you keep right."

"Make yourself perfectly easy, Comfort," said Socrates. "Doctor Skyelake is a great and good man,—a wise philosopher, whose object is to do good, not harm."

But, with all these assurances, Comfort could not help but feel uneasily at being in the presence of one whom now she had no doubt had been dead for more than two hundred years. Her eyes again contracted as she turned and walked noiselessly away (noiselessly, for she was barefooted) to the extreme other end of the room, and then beckoned Socrates to come to her.

Socrates obeyed the summons and stepped quietly over to her side, and brought down his right ear to within an inch of her mouth to receive the question that had already got its head out of her partly-opened lips.

"Does he know what folks is *thinkin'* about?" she asked, in so low a whisper that even that near right ear of the listener scarcely heard it."

"Everything! everything!" the potato answered, before

Socrates had got his mouth nearer than within three inches of the woman's upraised ear.

So startled was Comfort, that she had turned and made three rapid but very soft steps towards the door, with the full intention now of rushing out and into the dark woods, before Socrates (who well knew her intention) succeeded in grasping one of her arms, and holding her back by main force. But even Socrates himself was now alarmed, and the instant he succeeded in bringing Comfort to a halt, he raised himself on tiptoe (still holding the woman by a firm grasp), and looked over the old man's shoulder, with an expression of profound wonder upon his face, at the man-potato in the pan.

Lucifer, ordinarily very slow and deliberate in his movements, had bounded to his feet the instant the words "everything, everything!" were said,—he had been paying no attention at all to the actions of his wife and Socrates, nor had he heard a word that she had whispered,—and stooping considerably forward, not only his head but his whole body, he did nothing but peer and gaze, first into the old man's solemn face, then at the man-potato, and then again into the solemn face. But Doctor Skyelake only sat there eating fish and potatoes in the most innocent and unconcerned manner, not even once raising his eyes during the whole time.

"*Everything* what?" at last Lucifer asked, looking as he spoke, it is true, at the old man, but pointing in a downward curve with his bent forefinger at the man-potato.

"Sir?" asked Doctor Skyelake, for the first time looking up.

That single word was spoken in such a thunder-bass as utterly to deprive the questioner of the further power of speech. He only stood there a moment in silence, still staring; then he resumed his seat, and puffed his pipe from twenty to thirty times as rapidly as he could open and close his lips; nor did he ever reply to the question that had been asked in that single word, or even repeat his own. But Dr. Skyelake, without waiting five seconds for an answer, again turned his eyes down upon the victuals before him, and went to eating as if he had forgotten all about the matter, nor did he look up once again until he had finished his supper; then he raised his head and looked around from one to another of the silent and astonished three, smiling most benevolently as he did so, and said,—

"I heartily thank you, my kind friends, Lucifer, and Comfort, and Socrates. I have enjoyed my supper much, for it was excellent. Come now, and let us all sit up together near the chimney and have a *sociable*. I am sure we could not pass the time more pleasantly and innocently."

"I guess nothin' ain't a goin' to hurt nobody?" Comfort asked, with a shudder.

"If any one gets hurt or harmed in this house," said the potato, "I'll split this island wide open from north to south, and roll one half of it over into the sound on one side, and the other half into the sound on the other side!"

"Listen!" said Lucifer, springing again to his feet, and almost swallowing his pipe as he did so. "I swear that's comical! Didn't you hear that tater talkin'!"

"I heard it," said Doctor Skyelake, calmly. "Is there anything very remarkable about that, friend Lucifer?"

"Remarkable!" Lucifer exclaimed. "Who in the devil ever heerd a tater talk afore! I dug that thing up out o' the patch yisterday, and thought it was a tater, for it was growin' to the vines. But hanged if I don't b'lieve it's some sort of a little devil of a man! If I'd a knowed as much then as I does now, you wouldn't a kotch me puttin' my fingers on it!"

"I never did like them Blumudgins no way!" said Comfort. "And Lucifer, I wants you to git out o' the seed of 'em!"

"Why? why? why?" asked Doctor Skyelake, in apparent surprise. "Has *this* hurt you in any way?"

"Damnation!" said Lucifer, in great excitement, and for the time forgetting that he was in the presence of a great and terrible being. "I don't want taters talkin' 'round me that fashion! S'posin' I should a happened to got that one into my belly,—which I did come as nigh as a sixpence o' doin' this very day?"

"Why, it would not have hurt you in the least if you had eaten it," said Skyelake. "How does its *talking* hurt it? See here, Lucifer; though I am not at all hungry now, I will eat this fellow's legs and arms, merely to satisfy you that it is good and nutritious food. There! suppose you eat the *head*, now?"

"Don't you do it, Lucifer!" said Comfort, horrified at the bare thought,—“don't you eat that tater, Lucifer!"

"Eat that tater!" Lucifer exclaimed. "I swear I wouldn't eat the least bit of it to save my own life, that I wouldn't!"

"Oh, very well, then," said Doctor Skyelake. "It was a mere suggestion; there is no compulsion about it. But then, Comfort, *Blumudgins* are as good food as any other kind of potato."

"That may *be*," said Lucifer, in a tone somewhat calmer than he had been speaking, "but I shall git clare of the seed of *Blumudgins* right away; hanged if I don't!"

Doctor Skyelake placed the mangled body of the man-potato back in the pan, and turning to Socrates, remarked, "So you are pleased with my Pear Theory?"

"Wrapped in it, head and ears," Socrates answered.

"I am glad of it," said Doctor Skyelake, smiling pleasantly. "A work, let it be what it may, that can stand the test of careful examination,—that can be analyzed, synthetized, crumpled, powdered, evaporated, and then again solidified,—that is symmetrical and in good proportions under the microscopic test of intellect,—such a work *deserves* praise; and I truly hope that mine—that cost me such a world of patient research and honest labor—aye, that cost me my life—is a work of that character. I believe it is, renowned Socrates Junior; because you have tested it, and you are satisfied. Ah, Socrates, that *Chickimicomocachie* was a cruel wretch! a cruel, cruel wretch! a wretch whose heart was as cold and hard as the axe he struck with!"

Socrates arose to his feet: his eyes gleamed like fire. "I know nothing of the Indian language," he said, fiercely; "but if *Chickimicomocachie* does not mean VILLAIN, it ought to."

"Ah me!" continued Doctor Skyelake, with a sigh, "a cruel, cruel wretch, Socrates! How well I recollect now that I was sitting upon the embankment, gazing up into the starry sky; there was no moon that night, and——"

"Not so fast," said Socrates. "Excuse me, profound and venerated sir. But history says that the moon was at its full on that night, and that you were sitting there calculating the quantity of heat that came with the moonlight to earth in the space of an hour."

"Be calm and moderate, my friend," said Doctor Skyelake, kindly, "for you know it is philosophy to be calm and mod-

erate under all circumstances: for when the mind is in a collected state the intellect can see its objects more clearly; its vision has a more extensive range; it can look up higher, and down deeper, and farther away through the darkness. Be quiet a time, Socrates, and hear what I have to say; for I know better about the matter than *history* does."

"But, profound sir," said Socrates, "do not forget that *memory* is seated in the brain; and that when the great stone-axe fell with all its deadly force upon your cranium, and went crashing through the brain, memory must have been cleft into as much as ten thousand little bits——"

"Admit it," interrupted Doctor Skyelake; "then, one of those little bits would tell as reliable a tale as your *history*. There are but few histories that I am acquainted with worthy of the name,—few that do not contain ninety untruths to ten truths. Nine times in ten, Socrates, the 'historian' is a *weak man*: therefore nine-tenths of our 'histories' lack strength. I am only giving you my personal experience in this matter of my murder and the circumstances surrounding it. Hear me.

"I was sitting at midnight on the embankment, looking up into the sky, that was clear, starry, and moonless. I had not been there very long before my attention was attracted toward a comet, that grew continually in brilliancy and size. Its nucleus was in the shape of an egg, and its blazing tail reached far away behind it. Its movement was visible to the eye: it was shooting like a thunderbolt directly toward Regulus, in the Lion. Anxiously I watched it as it shot on nearer and nearer to the great star,—for I had no doubt but that the two would collide. Oh, with what feverish interest I sat there and looked, expecting soon to see millions of bright fragments of Regulus flying in every direction, and the battered and flattened comet sailing right on through the swarm of fragments! The comet went crashing into the star. At that identical instant Chickimicomocachie's stone-axe went crashing through my brain. But I saw stars, and fragments of stars, and fragments of fragments of stars, by the million millions. So sudden and unexpected was the blow, that I could not for some time bring myself to believe but that I was gazing up at the ruins of Regulus; aye, I was sure it must be so, until I attempted to open my mouth to exclaim, *Wonderful!* then I discovered that one half of my head was lying on one shoulder, and the other

half on the other shoulder. Now there you have the *facts*, Socrates, let your history say what it may."

"Indeed!" said Socrates. "I am very glad, sir, to get at the truth of the matter, for history has it otherwise in several important respects. What a tremendous crash those two great bodies must have made when they came in contact! I wonder what became of the comet after the collision?"

"I forgot to tell you that," said Doctor Skyelake. "Around those million millions of fragments I saw at least twenty thousand full-sized Reguluses and twenty thousand long-tailed comets, each Regulus revolving with inconceivable velocity, and each comet with its nucleus as flat as a pewter plate, and every one of them with battered and ragged edges."

"Hard telling, I should say," said Socrates, "which got the worst of the butt! But I had thought, sir, that Regulus was a solid, compact body, and that there was so little matter and substance about a comet that forty thousand of them, coming one immediately after another, might strike Regulus plumb in the same spot and not make an indentation three inches deep. Is it possible that comets are of such hard, *tough* matter, and fixed stars of such hard, *brittle* matter? Well, *there* is useful knowledge acquired, at any rate: the substance of stars is *friable*, that of comets *malleable*,—a good point! But, doctor, did you ever have knowledge to fall upon your head like a heavy weight? This of stars and comets comes to me in that way; it comes crashing down upon my brain as the fiery bolt hurled from the hand of Jupiter strikes the oak. Bless my life! it has torn and shattered me into shreds! Six of my forty-nine books are crowded from preface to finish with 'unanswerable arguments' showing that comets are mere *nebulæ*,—mere clouds, as it were, of glimmering light; matter imponderable; unshaped, intangible substance! Bless me! Bless me! Two thousand pages to prove a lie! To think that I should have *lost* so much precious time, and squandered such a world of pains and brains! Bless me! Bless me! How unfortunate!"

Socrates had reached up both his hands, and while he was giving a loose rein to grief, and making those sorrowful exclamations, he was also tearing great bunches of the tangled hair from his head.

Lucifer and his wife had recovered from their fright, and

now, as Socrates was making sad havoc of his hair, Comfort called out across the fireplace, "Don't! don't do that! All the hair you've got is about your ears, and if you git that little out you *will* look ugly, sure 'nough, with your head as clean and slick as a dry gourd!"

"No, you'd better not do it," said Lucifer; "for if you do, hanged if your head won't freeze and crack open when winter comes on."

"Such transports of fury accomplish no good, friend Socrates," said Doctor Skyelake, mildly. "There is nothing, after all, so very unfortunate in your case as you seem to think there is. You have written forty-nine books,—certainly you intend to write *one* more. No philosopher should stop at forty-nine books, it is too near an even half-hundred. Now, I know that you are intelligent, quick, ready-witted. Write the fiftieth book; in it you can explain away the seeming difficulty without the least trouble, and to the entire satisfaction of both the scientific and the unscientific world, and that, too, without taking back a single word that you have said in those six books on comets and stars."

"Do you think so?" asked Socrates, hopefully, as he threw the hair that he had torn from his head on the floor, and rammed both his hands into his trousers' pockets.

"Think so? Nothing more certain," said the doctor, as he laughed at Socrates's simplicity. "Few scientific authors, my friend, that are not continually doing the very thing that you now have in hand to do. Instead of injuring, it will be the making of you, if you manage it cleverly."

Socrates was still more hopeful at hearing this. He smiled faintly, then laughed feebly, and then seated himself again and remained silent for some time.

Lucifer and his wife both mustered up sufficient courage to join in Socrates's laugh. And the whole trouble was soon forgotten, even by Socrates himself.

"Did you know, Lucifer," asked Doctor Skyelake, smiling benevolently, "that this earth is shaped like a *pear*?"

"Can't say I did," said Lucifer. "But then it makes devilish little difference to me whether it's pear shape, or plum shape, or round, or flat, or square, so things goes along right, and the fish bite lively,—which they don't bite nowadays nothin' like what they used to; for here I've been out in the

sound three days hand runnin' and ain't had twenty bites. Maybe you can tell me what's the best bait for trout?"

"And the hawks has been catchin' my chickens mighty brisk of late days," said Comfort; "and I shouldn't wonder if you couldn't tell me the best ways to keep the warmints from pesterin' me like they does."

"My simple friends!" said Socrates, in amazement, "I truly hope that this great man will kindly excuse your vulgarity; but pray ask no more such questions, for depend upon it you place yourselves in a most ridiculous light by doing so. I much question that the profound philosopher whom you address has ever allowed such commonplace subjects as trout-baiting and hawk-catching to enter his mind,—if, indeed, he is aware of the existence of either trout or hawks. Pray ask no more such simple and vulgar questions."

"Didn't you never eat fish, and chickens, and eggs and sich, when you was livin'?" asked Lucifer, looking into the doctor's benevolent face.

"Many and many, and many, and many a time!" he replied.

"I 'spected as much: and maybe you've kotch many and many a trout, and killed many and many a hawk too?"

"Lucifer!" said Socrates, sharply.

"Many and many and many and many a one!" said Doctor Skyelake, in answer to Lucifer's question. "I have sat by the hour, and baited my hook with worms, and caught eels and catfish, and, in fact, any sort of fish that might choose to bite; and as to hawks, I think I have caught and killed together two hundred. Where do you fish, Lucifer? You must be a tame fisherman not to have had twenty bites in three whole days!"

"I fishes out here in the sound," Lucifer answered.

"I supposed that: but *where* in the sound?"

"Well, it's this way: I've got four stakes sot. I paddles out and takes them, one after another; if I don't catch after tryin' 'em all, I comes back home."

"Go out again to-morrow; take two other stakes with you: stick one of them in water that is deeper, and the other in water that is shallower than that at the four stakes that are already stuck. If need be, give both places a *fair* trial; then return home, fish or no fish. *Don't tie to a single one of the old stakes.* Bob vigorously, and in every direction around

you. Now as to your hawks, Comfort, I will make a trap for you to-morrow with my own hands. Leave hawks to me."

Socrates was astounded at the great man's condescension, as well as to hear from his own mouth that he had at any time during his life stooped to such things as baiting his hook with worms, and catching eels and catfish. But Lucifer and Comfort were so highly pleased that they both at the same instant were moved to take their pipes from their mouths, and draw the ends of the stems through their hands to wipe off the spittle, and offer them, half filled and well lighted as they were, to the old man to smoke. But he pleasantly declined both offers, saying that it always made him giddy-headed to smoke, even as much as ten whiffs.

"Can it be possible, profound sir," asked Socrates, "that you have ever baited your hook with worms and sat fishing for eels?"

"Not only baited with worms and fished for eels," said Doctor Skylake, "but, after catching eels and other fish, I have many and many and many a time squatted down, whetted my knife on my shoes, and cleaned those fish nicely; then kindled a fire, peppered and salted the fish, and cooked and eat them all but the bones, which I always picked out with my fingers and fed to the cats after I had got through eating."

Socrates was amazed.

"There is more philosophy in such things, friend Socrates, than you probably ever dreamed of."

Socrates, who for some time had been sitting on one of the low stools not far from Doctor Skylake, now raised both hands, and ran his fingers and thumbs violently, a dozen or more times, through what remained of his hair, until every strand of it stuck straight out, and had the appearance of being fine wire rather than hair; then, ceasing a time to rub, he continued to hold his hands about his ears, while he turned his eyes toward the philosopher and stared vacantly for the space of five minutes into his face without uttering a word. During this whole five minutes Doctor Skylake was looking back into Socrates's face, and he too was silent; but so frank and amiable was the expression of his countenance, that no one to have seen him could have believed that he harbored a scintilla of enmity against any living being upon earth. At last Socrates turned his eyes away, lowered his forehead slowly

down into the palms of his hands, and sat, with his elbows resting on his knees, looking down at the space on the floor between his two feet. But it was not long before his head suddenly popped up: a smile was now on his face, for a happy idea had come into his mind.

"This earth, doctor," he said, "is a big peg-top."

"Exactly," said Doctor Skyelake; "and it is forever spinning."

"Sublime!" said Socrates. Then he looked up into the roof, and wrapped himself again, head and ears, in the mantle of meditation.

"What do you think of sturgeon as a eatin' fish?" asked Lucifer of the doctor.

"It is capital food," said Doctor Skyelake, with warmth; "and then sturgeon is fish (we will call it *fish*) that a blind man can safely undertake to eat, from the fact that it is boneless."

"I ain't been so mad in a year as I was this very morning!" said Comfort, with a chuckle. "I had a live blue-fish in my hand, and was just gittin' ready to scale him, when—think he didn't bite me as a dog would a done! Here's the print of his teeth in my thumb and forefinger yet. You see I thought the warmint was about dead when I took him up,—but it warn't long after he bit me before he *was* dead; for *I* was mad then, as well as him, and I took his ugly head off in short order."

"Getting angry for such a cause was very foolish in you, Comfort," said Doctor Skyelake. "The fish knew no better than to bite you, but *you* are a *reasonable* creature. Now, if you had not cut his head off as you did, but had stood and quarrelled and fretted for an hour, he would have bitten you again, if he had been alive still, and you had given him an opportunity: *he* is *not* a reasonable creature. Nature has given him the evil *propensity*, or whatever you may call it, without placing a bridle and bit on that propensity; with you the case is very different. A blue-fish will devour its own young,—which is full proof to my mind of its utter lack of *reason*, if there were no other. But Comfort, you have reason, and therefore you did a very silly, nay, wicked thing, to take revenge on a fish. The fish biting you, and then your getting into a passion and attacking the fish, is much as a battle be-

tween two blue-fish, in which the most powerful gains victory. Now anger is a sting that requires great care in the thrusting, for not unfrequently it bends from its object and pierces him that aimed it. Never again so far forget yourself as to aim your sting until after deliberate consideration,—never aim it at an irrational creature; for, though you will have no difficulty in piercing it, the barbs of the sting may hold the dead carcass at your side until it shall decay, and its odor become offensive not only to yourself, but to all others who may come near you; the putrid carcass may have to be lugged about by you for a long time. It is best that we be patient, and bear ills as quietly as possible, Comfort; therefore, when you are bitten by a blue-fish again, wipe the blood from your finger, and resolve to be more careful next time about handling such brutes. And do not forget that the reasonable creature who undertakes to avenge himself upon a brute, for injuries received from it, only lowers himself to its level, and recognizes it as an equal. I suppose you did not cook and eat *that* blue-fish?"

"That I did!" said Comfort; "he was a nice fat feller, too!"

"There you did wrong again; it was cannibalism. Never again slay and eat an antagonist; savages act upon that rule."

"What, not eat blue-fish?"

"Oh, eat as many of them as you wish to, for they are good food; but only don't get mad and murder them first."

Socrates had brought his eyes down from the roof, and was moving them up and down the line of the trio, who, as their faces plainly showed, were deeply interested in what they were talking about.

"Lucifer and Comfort!" he said, "for heaven's sake have some discretion—some sort of a shade of a shadow of a notion of propriety about you! This is the third time that you have brought in your rude, unmannerly interjections, and turned the conversation out of its legitimate channel upon the most vulgar subjects that could be thought of,—hawks, hens, eggs, catfish, worms, eels, sturgeon, blue-fish, and the like! I am utterly disgusted, indignant; and if *I* am so, how must the case be with this great, good, and profound philosopher and scientist?"

"Let them talk upon subjects that suit them best, friend," said Doctor Skyelake. "I assure you I take great interest in what they say. Company that is forever on its p's and q's is anything but enjoyable to a reasonable creature that has a soul a quarter of an inch long; and I believe that mine is longer than that. You and I will have full time to talk upon subjects that interest us most, but that would be unmeaning and boring to these. I think it would be highly selfish in us not to have respect for the pleasures of these good people, who, if we shut off all their pleasure views, will either go to sleep, or wish we were in Balahack for keeping them awake by our clatter. Let them talk as they will, friend Socrates."

"Socrates has been tellin' us all along that you was a great one," said Lucifer; "and you *is*, too; I know that!"

"I never seed a great man before in my life," said Comfort. "I likes 'em 'mazin'!"

"You have seen *me*," said Socrates, in a somewhat offended tone; "you have seen me every day for the past eighteen months. I am the author of forty-nine books, containing in the aggregate about fifteen thousand pages, and these books treat upon the most abstruse subjects. I may not be a great man, yet I am entitled to *some* credit."

"Forty-nine books!" Lucifer exclaimed; "and don't none of 'em tell how to make hawk-traps, and how to catch fish, and sich?"

"Bah!" said Socrates. "Really, Lucifer, if I did not know the fact that both you and Comfort are the kind-hearted souls you are, I should be tempted to get very angry."

CHAPTER XXVI.

ASLEEP NEAR THE ISLAND SHORE.

THE boat that contained Marie and her children and François and Jeannot and old Basil and Fawn and Timon passed out of the creek into the broad river, on the morning that they left the camp at Pine Island, just as the sun was rising. It was a morning much like that when Marie and her children

had been there before,—when they were fleeing from the very place to which they were now returning.

“Oh,” said Fawn, rising to her feet and looking around upon the scenes, “how beautiful! how wonderful! Dear Basil, why have you not described to us these scenes of light and loveliness? why have you not brought us to behold them?”

“Dear child,” old Basil said, “I knew you were content and happy, dwelling by the shores of Wild Lake, and I *feared* to show my children these: yet often I have told you of them,—of the broad river, reaching far away to the north and far away to the south from the mouth of the little creek out of which we have just passed,—of the silent wildernesses at the sides of the river. Often I have told you of how the waters here are sometimes as placid as those of our Wild Lake, and of how the waves sometimes arise and roll along, dashing among the flowers and trees that fringe the shores. Do you not remember?”

“And yet,” said Fawn, “you told us not *how* beautiful all is. Oh, what a world of light is before us!”

“Nor could I, dear child, have conveyed to you a correct idea of what you now see. I painted the picture as perfectly as I was able,—but what are pictures when placed side by side with the real? Pen nor pencil, nor the language of man, can truly tell of God’s glorious creations: they must speak for themselves. I have told you of the world that you had not seen, hoping that you might be made familiar with it though outside of it, believing that you might take the picture of the world unseen and compare with it that seen, and so be enabled to see the unseen, but I was mistaken; and glad I am that I knew not of the mistake until now, for I should have been miserable if I had known it.

“You will remember that I have often told you that I might at any time die and leave you alone,—that then you should bury me under the ground,—that after that you should take the skiff and make your way out here, and still on into the great world yonder. Ah, what I said was but a riddle to you, and all the pains I took in pointing out the course that you should take was all as nothing! I told you that when you should get this far you should move on to the northward, across the wide waters, until you should reach the habitations of men.

Yonder are those wide waters: the land beyond it is too distant to be seen from here."

"I am glad," said Timon, "that we have come *now*, and with you, for alone we should be lost here; alone we would return to die near the shores of Wild Lake."

"Thank God," said old Basil, "that we are here together!"

The sails of the boat were raised, the oars taken in, and the little boat went creeping along before the light breeze.

"We have the wind fair and gentle," said François; "and no doubt, if we move straight on, we shall be able to reach the place for which we are aiming before night. But we must remember the necessity of being extremely watchful and cautious now, and the question suggests itself to my mind: Shall we go boldly on? This lady and these children are under our protection and care. Is it well to venture out into the broad sound, and then on to the coast, where, no doubt, we shall be received inhospitably, in the manner that we are now going, or would it be more prudent and wise to take these sails down, and wait until night comes on, before we push on?"

"I know from experience," said old Basil, "that we shall have to deal with a rude, savage people, let us meet them when we may. Yet I am inclined to think that our best course now is to put on a bold front, and sail on as we are going. I should apprehend greater danger to land there in the night-time, for then we would not have our eyes to help us, and eyes are sometimes valuable aids in the prevention of evil."

"We will try it," said François. "God grant that we have taken the best way to rid ourselves of a dilemma!"

When the boat rounded the west end of Durant's Island, and passed out into the broad sound, Fawn and Timon were amazed at the extent of the waters. François and Jeannot were still sitting near the tiller; old Basil, Timon, and Paul occupied the thwart, nearly amidships; and Marie and her children and Fawn were in the bow.

"What strange-looking yellow clouds are yonder!" said Fawn, pointing to the eastward. "They seem to be floating upon the water."

"They are not clouds, child," said old Basil, "but hills of yellow sand on the coast-reef. We aim to land there."

"Are we now in the Atlantic Ocean?" asked Timon.

"No, indeed!" said Paul, laughing. "This is Albemarle

Sound. Great as it may seem to you, Timon, it is a mere pond in comparison with the Atlantic."

"I had no thought," said Timon, "that the ocean could be so immense as this! What a great world this must be that we are going into!"

The wind, that had been light from the start, lulled away at last to a mere breath; and the little boat, that had got within a few miles of the coast, was barely moving, when Jeannot, who had been constantly on the watch, suddenly exclaimed, "See, a boat is being rowed out towards us!"

All eyes instantly turned in the direction in which he was pointing (which was directly over the bow), and there, indeed, was a little boat, rowed by two oars, bounding and foaming directly toward them. All sat mutely gazing until the boat began to turn to one side from the course that it had been holding in a bee-line from the shore.

"The rowers are women!" said Marie. "And one of them must be very old, for see how white the hair that is streaming out before her face! What can they mean?"

"Impossible to tell!" François answered. "They have drawn a circle around us, and are now speeding back to shore."

"It looks badly!" said old Basil. "They did not even speak. I fear there is mischief brooding!"

"Lady," said François, "I cannot consent to bear the heavy responsibility of proceeding farther until *you* speak. Their object was no doubt to satisfy themselves fully that this is their boat. Evil is impending, and we have no means of defence; and, in case we are attacked by these people, it will be out of our power to protect you and these children. Say then,—shall we turn back, or continue on?"

Marie hesitated but a few moments before replying: "Let us trust in God's mercy for protection, and proceed!"

"Let us unship the mast and put out the oars," said François.

Dark night had come on when the keel of the boat went grinding on the sand in the shallow water; the boat swung around broadside to the shore; the men were making hasty preparations to get out and draw it nearer in to land, when the bright flash was seen, and the loud report heard, and then two balls came whistling over old Basil's head,—one pass-

ing through the main-sail, the other through the crown of his cap.

Great was the confusion and distress that followed. In a twinkling old Basil snatched up Fawn's bow and sent an arrow whizzing at a dark object at the shore: another flash and loud report instantly followed this; then the oars were put out and the boat shot away into the darkness.

"Dear madame," said old Basil, as he toiled with all his might at his oar, "were you or your children hurt? Fawn! Timon!"

"Thank God, we are all unhurt," said Marie.

"Thank God! Thank God!" said the old man.

"Tear off some of your clothing, men," said François, who was steering the boat away: "the oars must be muffled, for no doubt we will be pursued. Feather your oars and make no plashing in the water now." And in a few minutes the boat was gliding noiselessly back in the direction from which she had come.

"Will it not be better to change our course, François?" asked Jeannot. "When they come in pursuit, it will, no doubt, be in a lighter boat than this, and with more oars than we have, and, besides, the pursuers will most probably come on in this very course. Suppose we run across to the island that we saw as we came here?"

"We can do nothing better," said old Basil, "than to go there, and wait and listen for them; then, probably, after a time we may proceed safely on."

The boat was then steered for the island, and in less than half an hour she was resting quietly near its shore.

"Hark!" said Paul, in a shuddering whisper. "Is not that the sound of their oars? and are they not coming in this direction?"

"It is the sound of the pursuing boat," said François, "but they are going in the direction from which we came to-day. How rapid their strokes! It is well that we are here!"

Then all sat quietly listening as the boat passed rapidly on toward Croatan. Fainter continually became the creaking and rumbling sounds, until at last they ceased to be heard.

"My friends," said old Basil, "I have been sitting here considering. I have thought of a plan of action which I will submit to your good judgment. Our condition, as you know,

is a desperate one ; yet we must not despair ; but, on the other hand, keep our wits closer about us than ever. I propose, François, that instead of running back into the river, you steer over to or near the high bluff that we saw on our right as we came along to-day ; it is in full view from this island, and not more than four or five miles away. You will have no difficulty in finding a hiding-place at that wild shore, behind which is the great wilderness from which we have so recently come ; but even if it should be impossible to keep the *boat* safely, you can leave it and escape into the woods. That is the first part of my plan. The second part is that you leave me on this island."

"Leave you !" said François ; "upon an island, and among strangers, who in all probability are as rude and inhospitable as the dwellers upon the coast ? Go away and leave you here alone ?"

"I am an old man, and at best have not much longer to live," said old Basil. "Both of you are young and vigorous. I have been with you already long enough to know that not only this unfortunate lady and her children, but also my precious ones, will be in good hands."

"But what is the object ?" asked François. "What can be the good results of your remaining here alone ?"

"I must admit," said old Basil, "that the prospect of accomplishing good is far from flattering ; and yet good *may* result. This island is but a few miles from the coast ; my life *may* be preserved. I *may* make friends, however rude the people may be. I *may* learn more about the people at the coast. I *may* enlist the sympathies of rude friends. I *may*, under some pretext, cross with them safely to the coast. I may prepare a way for us all to go there safely. I *may* get information of the lost one for whom you are searching. Again, if you go to the opposite shore and remain there, as I have suggested, I shall be but a short distance from you,—so near that we may be able to communicate by signals at night, and these signals may be made to speak good news or bad. We are in a dilemma, but we must keep a good heart ; and it may be that we shall yet triumph over the adversities that are besetting us, and overcome the obstacles that are in our way. Whether we do so or not, let us strive on with a good heart !"

Sad, indeed, was the grief of Fawn and Timon at hearing this. They clung to their kind old friend and wept and moaned, beseeching him to remain with them.

"No, my precious children," said the old man, "I cannot remain with you; a high and noble duty calls, and I must obey. May God watch over and protect us all! I leave you in His care, and with kind friends." Saying these words the old man stepped from the gunwale to the sandy shore.

"But the signals," said François. "What shall they be?"

"I intended to speak of that before parting," old Basil said, "and was only waiting for this poor old heart to cease its wild fluttering a time. If any sad misfortune befall you, hold up three lights,—but you will always have to wait for my signal to know that I am in place. One light from me will tell you that I am unharmed; a reply in the same manner will tell me the same of you. Two lights will tell you of good news; answer in the same manner, then wave your lights to cheer me. Two lights that remain steady a few minutes, and then wave, and then the disappearance of one and the remaining steady of the other, will speak good news and tell you to cross over to me. Answer my signals as you receive them." A rustle was heard among the bushes near the shore,—the old man was gone. Then the boat moved off toward Croatan Bluff.

An hour passed, and then those who were in the boat, that was making her noiseless way to the westward still, and had almost reached the land, heard again the rumble of oars away to the southward of them. Louder and louder the sounds became. The pursuers' boat was heading directly toward them. Quick now were the strokes of the muffled oars, and soon the boat passed into the mouth of a little creek a few hundred yards to the southward of the bluff; there at the shore she was brought to a halt, and then drawn under the thick cypress boughs that arched over and reached down even into the water. Here they remained, still as death.

Day was beginning to dawn, and it was not long before the pursuers' boat was seen. It came and halted near them. The rowers drew in their oars across the gunwales and rested. The dim figures of four persons could be seen. Their voices could be heard. But it was not long before their boat was headed toward the island, the oars were put out again, and it

passed away and away until it was hid behind the rush-covered point.

Here the refugees remained for hours watching, but naught was seen by them but the broad waters and the lands beyond, and at last they came forth from their hiding-place and sailed away; and when again the shadows of evening began to gather around them they had reached the west end of Durant's Island, at the mouth of the broad river. The wind had died away again, the boat was tied at the shore, and the weary ones prepared for rest and slumber.

In a few minutes the children were asleep, and then the tired mother followed her darlings into the beautiful dream-land. Even François and Jeannot, as greatly as they desired to watch, sat in their places and nodded and napped.

All was still. The skies were glittering with stars. The watchers were fitfully dreaming. Suddenly Jeannot sprang to his feet.

"François!" he called, "François! what noise is that?"

"Great heaven!" said François, "it is the creaking of oars! Our pursuers are upon us,—they are rounding the point,—unship the mast! Quick, Jeannot, while I shove her as far as possible under these bushes! There, lie down! I can watch them best from here. Here they are, nearly upon us!"

"Is the stern concealed?" asked Jeannot; "can you not shove her a few inches farther under?"

"It is not quite concealed, but she will go no farther. Hish-h!"

The pursuers' boat shot by into the river, almost scraping as it went the half-concealed stern. On, on it went, the creak and rumble sounding less and less distinctly as they made their rapid way up the broad river.

"Let us be off," said François; "they may return."

"But where shall we go?" asked Jeannot.

"I know of nothing better to do," said François, "than to skirt along the southern shore of this island to the eastward, then on up toward the head of the great lake that we saw as we passed out of the river to-day. We shall be following an inland route back in the direction of the island upon which we left Basil. I am inclined to believe that the head of the lake is near the little creek we left this morning. If so, we could not be at a better place, as we must in some way manage

to be where we can look out for the signals if possible; and I am sure it cannot be far through the woods from the head of the lake to the sound-shore opposite Basil's island. By taking this course, too, we will in all probability baffle our pursuers, who no doubt watched us as we came into the river, and will be apt to think that we have gone on up."

"Mercy! mercy!" screamed Marie, waking from sleep. "Where are we going in such haste? Where are the children?"

"Pray be quiet, lady," said François. "Our pursuers are not far away; they came almost upon us while you were sleeping. Do you not hear that rumbling up the river? They have passed up."

"Are the children all safe?" asked the frightened mother.

"They are all near you," said François. "Not one of them has even aroused from sleep."

"Thank God that we have escaped again!" said the now weeping mother. Then all was still again except the subdued sobbings of that sorrowing one.

The hour of midnight had passed before the head of the great lake was reached. The faithful toilers rested, and it was not long before even they were buried in deep sleep; nor were the slumbers of the tired ones broken until the sun had risen high over the eastern woods.

CHAPTER XXVII.

SPIRITS CONVERSING.

"HERE'S what fishin' at new places does!" said Lucifer Grindle to his wife, as he lifted a basketful of fine trout from his shoulder and sat it down near the scaling-bench. "Shouldn't wonder if I ain't found out a thing or two lately. Hang me, Comfort, if that old ghost ain't got a long head. Sure's you're born he ain't no fool."

"And there's what new-fashioned traps does for hawks," said Comfort, pointing her finger, as she chuckled gladly, to three large hen-hawks that were hanging by their legs, head down-

ward, to the limb of a little tree that grew near the door. "I shan't never be pestered with *hawks* no more,—*that* I shan't! Oh me! wouldn't the hens and the roosters and the chickens and the eggs be glad if they only had sense enough to know what a cute thing these traps is to catch hawks with? Oh, my, my, my!"

"Doctor Skyelake is a very great man," said Socrates, who had come out of the house to learn what Comfort was laughing so heartily about. "And I am very glad that you believed me when I told you that he would certainly come. See what service he has rendered you, though it was less than twenty-four hours ago when he came."

But the doctor was heard to call from within the house. "Lucifer!"

"Ay—ay!" answered Lucifer; "I'm here."

"And I'm *here*," said Doctor Skyelake; "and I wish *you* to be here and not *there*, or I would not have called."

Lucifer advanced to the door and poked in his head and said, "Well, here I is. What do you want?"

"Come *here*!" said the doctor, in a sepulchral tone.

Lucifer started. "Here I is," he said.

"Where have you been to-day?"

"Me?—Fishin'."

"What did you catch?"

"Me?—Half a bushel basket rammed, jammed, and piled full of fat trout. Just as nice as ever was seed."

"You fished at new places?—in deep and shallow water?"

"Jes' so: that's what you told me, you know."

"I know. Fish again to-morrow at still *other* new places. If the fish don't bite at one place, after reasonable waiting, go to another; if they fail *there*, go to another; and so keep going, if need be, until you get half a bushel of fat trout again. Mind you, though, don't tie to an *old stake*, not even at those you put down to-day; don't spit on your bait; and don't come back to this house, Lucifer Grindle, until you have caught at least half a bushel of fat trout. Don't come back here with less than half a bushel of fat trout, I say, even if it should take you two whole weeks to catch them."

"Don't spit on the bait, you say?"

"Not once."

"All right. I'll try it. But hanged——"

"Lucifer!"

"What?"

"Don't fail to-morrow to do exactly as I have said. Wait. Where are you off to in such a hurry?"

"Me?—I was goin' to help Comfort to clean and salt the fish."

"Where did you stick those two stakes to-day?"

"Right in the mouth o' Shallowbag Bay, where old Sir Walker Rawdle and his crew throwed over their slops and beef-bones. They tell me the fish hangs around eatin' them bones and things yet. It's the best place in the round world to fish at."

"The world is not *round*, Lucifer," said Socrates, whose head was protruding in at the door; "it is pear-shaped."

"How do you know," asked Doctor Skyelake, "that it is the best place in the world to fish at?"

"Me?—Why, I've tried it."

"Tried what? Have you fished all over the world?"

"Well, I guess not quite; but I've fished pretty smart about here."

"Lucifer," said Doctor Skyelake, "don't fish within half a mile of Shallowbag Bay to-morrow."

"Then nothin' won't be kotch!" said Lucifer, snappishly; "for hanged——"

"Lucifer!"

"What?"

"Don't—fish—within—half a mile—of Shallowbag Bay to-morrow!"

"All right. I'll try it."

"My friend Philip Amidas anchored his ship at the mouth of that bay upwards of two hundred years ago. The fish there shall have a jubilee to-morrow. I am determined they shall have one rest day in two centuries."

"Where's another good place?" Lucifer asked.

"Find one, Lucifer; you have your eyes. But so much for fishing to-morrow. Now tell me, friend, were you ever in all the days of your life at a place called North Banks?"

"Haw, haw!" laughed Lucifer. "It ain't but three mile from here. Me and my daddy and mammy and all my folks was borned and bred and raised and fotch-up there: so was Comfort. Thirty years ago, or nigh on to it, me and Comfort

come across here to live, and we're lived here ever since. North Banks? In course I've been to North Banks."

"Why did you and Comfort come across here to live?"

"Why?"

"Yes: why?"

"Why?"

Doctor Skyelake looked straight into Lucifer's eyes; his face swelled like a balloon, and his eyes seemed to roll over and over as he repeated, "Yes: why?" There was nothing human in the terrible voice: that "why" seemed to be a mile long. It started from the very bottom of his stomach, and came rumbling up and then stringing away out into the air.

Lucifer made two backward steps, staring wildly as he did so. "I don't scarcely know *why*," he said; "it's been so long."

"If you *do* know *why*, friend Lucifer," said Socrates, stepping excitedly into the door, "tell him; or I warrant you the fishing season at this island will come to a sudden close."

Doctor Skyelake looked vacantly down upon the floor and seemed to be deeply meditating. Then he looked up into Lucifer's still terrified face. He had never looked so benevolently in all the days of his life. It was like sparkling flowers after the thunder-storm. "Friend Lucifer," he said, in the kindest manner imaginable, "I think you had better be assisting Comfort about cleaning and salting those fat trout now, for it would be a great pity for one of them to spoil. But I will come and help you myself, so that your wife can go about cooking a few of them nicely for our supper."

"That I will," said Comfort, who was delighted beyond measure at the happy turn things had taken (for she had been standing at the door listening to everything that had been said, instead of cleaning fish),—"that I will; and you shall say they *are* nice, too, when I have 'em smokin' in the pan."

"I have already learned, my good woman," said Doctor Skyelake, "that you know how to fry a fish nicely; but please be as expeditious about it as possible, for I purpose going to the North End after supper, and would be glad to have you all to accompany me."

"Profound sir," said Socrates, answering for himself and the rest, "nothing could afford us greater pleasure. But will you condescend to inform us what you are going for?"

"With pleasure," said the doctor, smilingly: "to exchange greetings with old and highly respected friends."

"Ah—yes," said Socrates, looking puzzled; "friends of the old day, no doubt?"

"You shall see for yourself, friend Socrates," said the doctor.

Lucifer and his wife got to the scaling-bench in advance of the others. "It's devilish hard to git the run of the old feller," said Lucifer, in a very low tone, to his wife. "He gits from storms to calms the quickest I ever seed yet."

"Let me have your scaling-knife, Comfort," said Doctor Skyelake, as he went toward the bench. "Lucifer and I will work here, while you are preparing supper." He then, to the great astonishment of Socrates, threw off his coat and went to work in good earnest. And long before their work was finished the doctor and Lucifer were chatting and laughing together as jovially as if they had been born brothers. After supper the whole party, including Comfort, wended along the main path together to North End.

"Now, Lucifer," said Doctor Skyelake, when they had arrived at the Point, "get ready your lightwood, and flint and steel and tinder, and let us have a light."

"Where are your friends?" asked Socrates.

"On the other side of the sound."

"On the *other* side?" Comfort asked, in a surprised manner. "What, away over yonder to Croatan? Can you and them hear one another that fur?"

"Don't begin talkin' till I gits my fingers well down in my ears so as to shut off the sound," said Lucifer: "and you and Socrates had better do the same, Comfort; for sure's you're born he's goin' to wake snakes when he gits well at it,—it's five mile across this sound to Croatan."

"Keep your fingers out of your ears, friend Lucifer," said the doctor, "for we shall do little more than whisper. Give me the torch that you have lighted; now look and listen as I hold the light up:

"Philip Amidas! renowned captain! Is all well? Speak! appear!"

In less than two minutes after that question was asked a light beamed out from the other shore, and a voice was heard replying (it was a deep, dismal bass voice, that seemed to be

coming from a point three hundred miles beyond Croatan):

“Profound Doctor Skyelake! All is well!”

“Philip Amidas! renowned captain! Shall we meet soon?”

“Profound doctor! We shall!”

“Philip Amidas! renowned captain! Farewell!”

“Farewell!” arose from the deep bowels of the Croatan wilderness, and came rolling over on the waves to North End; and then, after two minutes of solemn silence, Collington Island, six miles to the northward, rumbled back the deep bass echo, “*Farewell!*” The light at Croatan disappeared.

“That—does beat—all!” said Comfort, shuddering.

“Profound and venerated philosopher,” said Socrates, in a tone and manner of awful respect, “do you expect to be visited soon by the bold Captain Philip Amidas?”

“Not only by Philip Amidas, but by the renowned Arthur Barlow, and his wife and children.”

“I am truly glad to hear it,” said Socrates, “for I have a great curiosity to know something of the appearance and manners of those brave captains.”

“You will find them to be plain, honest men,—nothing more.”

“Let me know a day or two ahead before they comes,” said Comfort; “for there’ll be a right smart bunch of ’em, and I shall want to have plenty of wittles cooked.”

The party then returned to Lucifer’s house, and forthwith preparations were made for sleeping (for it was growing quite late), and in a very short time they were all apparently asleep.

Some little sticks were blazing and flickering in the fireplace, and throwing a pale light over the dingy room, and a score of lank shadows were continually dancing on the walls around as the flickering blaze would rise and fall. Lucifer and his wife occupied the bunk in one corner of the room; and in the corner diagonally opposite, and not far from the fireplace, lay Socrates and Doctor Skyelake on some dried rushes that were spread upon the floor.

It had not been exceeding five minutes since they had all snuggled themselves down in this manner for the rest of the night before the old rooster, whose seraglio was the three lower limbs of the cedar-tree that grew near the back-door, began to crow in a very shrill, loud voice. Six times he crowed, at in-

tervals of about a minute (which was long enough for him to get a reply from twenty different points in the neighborhood), and then he dropped off to sleep again.

Socrates, whose face, during the time that the crowing was going on, was about a foot and a half from that of his bed-fellow, opened his eyes (he had not slept a wink), and, without in the least stirring, ventured to remark, in a low tone, "There is a vast deal of curious natural history in a rooster, doctor, if it could only be got at. He is as regular in calling out his *All's well!* at midnight as is the watch on board a man-of-war." But no reply came. Doctor Skyelake showed evident signs of being fast asleep in earnest; the lids of his eyes seemed clasped and barred; a low, guttural, wheezy, croupy squeal was breathing through his slightly-parted lips. The squeal changed: first, into sounds much as when a wintry gust comes stealing in through the keyhole; then into piteous sobbings, like the wailings of a banshee; then into spasmodic whistlings; and at last into roaring, lumbering thunderings. No doubt the great man was fast asleep now,—no doubt of it.

For a time after he had addressed him, Socrates continued to lie there gazing admiringly into his companion's face. Benevolence, gladness, self-satisfaction, played and danced about with the smiles on his face. But after a while the thought came into his head that he too ought to be sleeping; he closed his eyes while gladness and benevolence were in the very midst of a cotillon with the smiles. The dancers began to grow weak: one by one they took their hats and bonnets and passed from the scene, until at last Socrates' face was left all alone. How blank it was by the time his eyes popped open again! New actors now began to make their appearance upon that face: Melancholy came and seated herself in the chair that Gladness had lately been occupying; then came Anxiety and sat upon a footstool, and did nothing but gaze up into the face of Melancholy; then these two arose and walked around together, silent, and with their heads drooping; and at last they went and sat, each, on the middle of an eyeball; they folded their arms, crossed their legs, and hung their heads, and looked as if they intended to remain there all night. Socrates, with a nervous twitch, moved his head six inches farther away from his friend's. Soon after this, Anger came stalking and swaggering

on with a rake in his hand; and with this he went to work raking up the skin of the forehead into heaps and piles.

The snoring seemed now to be coming up from the great man's bowels; it was heartrending; it seemed that each gasp and spasm would be the last of the profound philosopher. By this time Socrates' face was swarming with demons. By a sudden motion he rammed both his forefingers as deep down into his ears as they could be got, and at the same time flapped over with his back to his companion. Then again he closed his eyes, and tried to persuade himself into the belief that in less time than ten seconds he would be fast asleep; but ah! those eyes were soon again wide open, and staring vacantly at the opposite wall.

Lucifer and his wife, who had all this time had their eyes closed, pretending to be soundly sleeping, now, one after the other, opened them (they were lying flat on their backs) and turned them cautiously, without moving a muscle of their bodies, and looked through the corners of them at each other. Not a word had even been whispered, yet those eyes were carrying on a mute conversation that ended in the conclusion that it would be safe now to turn their heads face to face and whisper to each other in the lowest tones.

"He's a powerful great man!" said Comfort.

"Hanged if I don't b'lieve he's a witch, though!" said Lucifer.

"YOU LIE!" interjected Doctor Skyelake. (These words were said between two snores.)

Socrates, who had not heard the least thing that had been whispered in the bunk, was so startled at hearing that "*You lie!*" that he went rolling over and over and over like a cart-wheel, until he brought his face up close to the wall.

At the instant the words were pronounced, Lucifer and Comfort, by an electric concert of action, jerked the quilt over their heads, and lay there still as mice, but trembling from head to foot.

"You oughtn't to talked so loud," at last Comfort ventured to whisper right into her husband's ear.

But the only reply that Lucifer returned was "Sh—h—h—h!" Then nothing but the snoring was heard.

Socrates, who found it out of the question to get a single wink of sleep, arose softly and went to the head of the bunk,

and putting his mouth very near Lucifer's upper ear, whispered in the lowest possible tone, "Did you ever know, Lucifer, of an instance of such remarkable acuteness of hearing? I marvel that he had not heard the brute Chickimicomocachie when he was creeping up behind him with the stone-axe uplifted."

"No marvel at all: for I had not then learned the art of hearing," said Doctor Skyelake; and instantly the snoring went on as before.

"Lay down, Socrates!" whispered Comfort, in great alarm. "I'm spectin' now every minit for the island to bust open and roll over!"

Doctor Skyelake made no further remark, for he was now asleep in good earnest. Nor did he stir once until after the sun had arisen. Then, as his eyes opened, they fell upon Socrates, who was sitting on a low stool a few feet off, staring into his face. Lucifer and his wife, whose heads were still covered with the quilt, were then having *their* time at snoring.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

SOCRATES THINKS THAT HIS FRIEND MUST BE SUBJECT
TO FITS OF INSANITY.

"WHAT have you *this* time, friend?" asked Doctor Skyelake, as Lucifer approached the house, lugging both a well-filled basket and sack, and staggering under the load.

"Well, here it is, and it may talk for itself," said Lucifer, proudly, as he emptied the contents of the basket and sack, one after the other, in a heap on the scaling-bench. "There's a bushel!"

"A *bushel*? Double the catch of yesterday! I suppose, Lucifer, that none of these are Shallowbag Bay trout?"

"The nighest that any one of 'em was kotch to Shallowbag Bay was a full mile. There warn't no spittin' on the hook neither."

"Where did you fish, friend? You must have sailed into a school of them."

"The fust place I stopped at was off against the Hummock;

from that I worked along down away to'ards Broad Creek. Sure's you're born I felt uncommon solomcholy when I went paddlin' out o' the bay ; and on by Ballast P'int, and the old stakes, and the new stakes, and everything ! and I've done some paddlin' too this very day ! But then, you see here what's done. You said find 'em, and here they is."

"Friend Lucifer," said Doctor Skyelake, as he laid his right hand familiarly on the fisherman's shoulder, "this is the best and most profitable day's work that you have done in fifty years,—and yesterday's work was next to this,—not because you caught half a bushel of fat trout on yesterday, and a bushel to day, but because in these two days *you have learned to think*. You started out this morning with the full determination to accomplish a certain thing, if possible, and you have worked well and faithfully, continually casting your eyes about you, moving first here, then there ; and bobbing wherever you might go with more energy and earnestness than you ever before bobbed in your life ; and here is a bushel of fat trout, the reward of honest labor and thought. Here are more fish than you would have caught in a whole week, if you had tied your boat to any of those old stakes. Probably, Lucifer, your grandfather stuck those old stakes?"

"No he didn't, neither," said Lucifer ; "for I've heerd him say, more times than I've got fingers and toes, that them stakes was there before he was a boy."

"Just so," said Doctor Skyelake ; "then it may be that one of the one hundred and eight emigrants put them there nay, it may be that they were stuck there by the aborigines themselves. But let all that be as it may, one thing is certain,—those stakes have been fished at times whereof the memory of man runneth not to the contrary."

"I don't know how long that is," said Lucifer ; "but they've been there many a day, and lots has fished at 'em."

"I can imagine, Lucifer, that I see, tied by its painter to one of those old stakes, and lazily swinging around, your skiff ; that I can see you sitting in the stern, with your legs crossed, and your eyes half closed, waiting by the hour for a nibble ! Why, friend, such a life is not fit to live ! A muskrat would not be content at it ! and shall it do for a *man* who can *think* ? It pays to think, Lucifer, as well as to act. No partnership was ever so successful as that of thought and action (or

Thought & Action, as the business man would express it). Energy of thought is the life of success, and energy of body is its chief engineer. But energy of body alone, or energy of mind alone, seldom accomplish much that is worth the accomplishing; they ought to operate together. New cider may effervesce and burst the barrel that contains it. There is energy for you; but waste, instead of profit, is the result,—the bursting might have been prevented. But the lack of energy of both mind and body is the dead carcass of a dog, that can only mould and putrefy, and become a greater and greater stench until it is buried out of sight. I said, friend Lucifer, that you have done the best day's work of your whole life to-day, and it is so. You cannot yet realize *how* profitable it is; but I tell you now, that benefits will flow and continue to flow to you from it, to the very last day of your life. To-day is to be a noted epoch in your life, a memorable day, a day that you could not forget even if you were to try. Henceforth you have a right to class yourself among the inventors and thinkers of the age. Hereafter, fish where you will, and in whatever manner you may desire. But, friend Lucifer, I am curious to know what your course will be when you start out fishing again."

"I don't mind tellin' you," said Lucifer. "I shall go to the good places that I found yisterday and to-day,—from one to another till I finds the fish. If they don't bite there, I'll look about for more good places. I shan't spit on my hook; and wherever I goes, I shall bob, bob, bob all around about."

"But suppose, after all, you should be unsuccessful?"

"Why, then, I'll have to come back home empty-handed. But I'll go agin, and keep goin' till I does git 'em, for they're there somewheres; and, if they're there, I knows now how to git 'em."

"You have learned well the valuable secret," said Doctor Skyelake, "and I predict that you will never hereafter want for fish. To put out one's hook here or there is not all, nor does it matter greatly whether you spit on the bait or not. The secret is, think, think, think; bob, bob, bob; and, if need be, move, move, move; and I say you have learned it. Depend upon it, it will be worth more to you than bushels of fat trout."

"I do believe it!" said Lucifer, as he whetted his scaling-

knife on the bench. "I do believe it is worth more than *ten* bushels!"

"I have been thinking, most profound and venerated philosopher," said Socrates, who had stepped out of the house, and was advancing toward the scaling-bench, "that the great Sir — Bless me!" (This exclamation was caused from his having stepped his bare foot on a sand-spur at the very instant that he uttered the word "Sir," and "Sir" was pronounced in the same exclamatory tone and manner as the "Bless me!" that followed it,—thus, "Sir! Bless me!") He hobbled to the bench as gracefully as one could be expected to do with a sand-spur sticking in his bare foot, and, seating himself upon it, lifted up the wounded foot on the opposite thigh, and with many grimaces pulled out the spur, then proceeded with what he had commenced), "that the great Sir Isaac Newton was much mistaken about very many things, and that a great deal of his *philosophy* is as chaff, destined to be scattered when the winds of time shall blow freely over it. The great man had too much to say about *gravitation*, too much about the centripetal and centrifugal forces, and too little about *magnetism*. Far be it from me to detract from the merits of so truly great a man; yet, without doubt, he shot his gravitation too high,—it went clean over the mark. Force undoubtedly is the cause of motion, and great is the misfortune that the learned philosopher had not, after saying that, dotted a period, and then gone and ate the apple. Do you not think so, Doctor Skyelake?"

"*Certainly!* Socrates," Doctor Skyelake answered. But it is wonderful how the doctor could have understood a word that was said; for during the whole time that Socrates was speaking he was whetting a knife for Comfort on the gritty scaling-bench, and every ten seconds thumbing its edge until he got it keen enough to suit him.

"I question," Socrates continued, "that the great man had much knowledge of the nature of magnetism. He could hardly have been aware of the fact that this earth is a great magnet; and that it is *magnetism* that keeps it in form,—holds it together,—acts upon its inert matter,—gives motion to——"

"*Certainly!*" said Doctor Skyelake again, as he lifted a large trout from the bench by its tail and turned it around and around before his eyes, comparing the color of its belly

with that of its back. "Certainly, Socrates! I dare say no sane man can deny that. Really, there is a great difference in the colors of this fellow's back and belly!"

Socrates, whose thoughts were more deeply engaged with the subject that he had in hand than upon what the doctor was saying and doing, continued: "The great Sir Isaac concluded, and very properly too, that the apple moved from the branch to the ground by reason of a force acting upon it,—certainly! *There was substance—force—action.* He was very correct in his conclusion that a force acting upon the apple brought it from the limb to the ground; but then, to call that force 'attraction,' that is the point! Now, magnetism——"

"Certainly, Socrates; *certainly!*" said Doctor Skyelake, as he started off from the scaling-bench, carrying as many of the cleaned trout as his two hands could hold to Lucifer, who, with his sleeves rolled up over his elbows, was stooping over the salting-tub, packing them away as fast as they could be brought to him. "Surely there can be no question in the world about that, Socrates!"

"I am very glad," said Socrates, "that you agree with me, profound sir! but then I am sure no reasonable man could do otherwise. Attraction may be one thing,—magnetism——"

"I shouldn't guess it would make sich a mighty difference what *names* things is called by so it's knowed what they is," said Comfort. "I know it wouldn't matter to me what my name mought be,—Comfort, or what not."

"Then you think as highly of your husband, whose name is Lucifer, as if his name were Gabriel?" asked Doctor Skyelake.

"Jes so!" she answered; "for what's the difference to me or him either? Some folks calls chubs *welchmans*, some again calls the same fish *black bass*; some calls pikes *pickerel*, and again some calls that same fish *jacks*. And so it goes,—some callin' em by one name and some by another; but what's it all then? The *eatin'* of a fish is what I'm after. Some fish I eats, and should if they was called *devil pups*; some again I don't eat, and shouldn't if their name was *chicken-gizzards*. All that about *names* ain't *nothin'* in my mind, Socrates."

A dark cloud arose on Socrates' brows. He was too indignant even to open his lips: all he did was to turn his unamiable eyes full upon the presumptuous woman.

"Comfort," said Doctor Skyelake, "you ought to be a

member of L'Académie Française or a Fellow of the Royal Society !”

“ A feller of what ?” asked Comfort, with a puzzled expression upon her face. “ I ain’t a man ; I’ve allus thought if I was one, I should rather be cap’n of a fore-and-aft scunner than anything else in the whole world.”

All this time Comfort had been standing by the bench, with her sleeves rolled up high, holding a trout by its head in her left hand and the scaling-knife in her right. She had paused from her work only to let the company hear what she thought of the importance of names ; that had been done, and now she placed the fish on the bench, scaled it, turned it over on its belly, cut off its head in a jiffy, and split it wide open down the backbone.

From the time the woman had uttered the first word until she had got through with what she had to say, and then cleaned the fish, Socrates had done nothing but stand stock still with his eyes riveted upon her ; and it was only after she had pitched *that* trout on the heap of others that she had cleaned that he slowly turned those eyes (that had by this time softened and lost much of their fierceness) toward the pile of still uncleared fish, as if to see which one she would take in hand next. She took another by its head, and then he spoke.

“ Really, Comfort, I was tempted to get very angry with you ; but there are many excuses to be made for ignorance. I cannot, however, refrain from saying that I think it full time that you should follow the example of your husband and learn to *think* before you undertake so freely to vomit out your undigested philosophy. All that you have been saying is not only exceedingly simple, but it is as far away from the subject as the north pole is from the south.”

“ Remember, Socrates,” said Doctor Skyelake, “ that *simples* produce compounds ; it may therefore be very proper to consider well the *elements* before venturing upon the compounds.”

“ See here,” said Lucifer, who had come up to the scaling-bench, and was holding up a trout and peering into its wide-open mouth, “ this feller has got a porgy in his throat, tail foremost ! Who ever heerd tell o’ sich a thing before ?”

“ And why not *tail foremost* as well as head foremost ?” asked Socrates.

“ Why not ?—because there’s his back fins as sharp as needles, and stickin’ up the wrong way ; that’s why.”

"There, Socrates, is a subject for your profoundest thought," said Doctor Skyelake. "How will you account for the trout's taking in the little fellow backwards?"

"Really," said Socrates, "I should have thought, before knowing of the difficulty that the fins present, that big fish would invariably swallow the little ones tail foremost from the fact that the big fish is the *pursuer*; and without question the *tail* of the *pursued* is the first part of him that is overtaken. Why, then, is it not the first part that is swallowed? in other words, how can the head be swallowed before it is overtaken?"

"I guess maybe it's sorter this way," said Lucifer:—"when the big fish fetches up near enough to the little feller that he's after, he opens his mouth and takes him in; and, so far as he cares, it's all the same if he comes in head foremost or tail foremost or sideways; for if he shouldn't happen to come in right, all he's got to do is to wallop him over with his tongue, and then he lets him *down* like he wants him. That's about like I should do it if I was a trout. Maybe this feller was so uncommon hungry that he warn't thinkin' about what he was doin' when he got the porgy in backards. That's the only way I can see into it."

"Your argument looks reasonable, Lucifer," said Doctor Skyelake. "The trout opens his mouth; takes in the minnow; closes his mouth; swallows the minnow. No doubt that is about the way of it. Yes, if he comes in backwards, he wallops him over with his tongue, and lets him down like he wants him. I have no doubt that that is exactly the way of it."

Socrates had evidently been turning the matter over in his mind. "It strikes me," he said, "that the trout might manage this porgy business in such a way as never to get one backwards."

"How is that?" asked the doctor.

"Look here," said Socrates, squaring himself for the argument (but instead of *looking here*, or even listening to the argument, the doctor was making himself very busy tugging at the porgy's nose); "suppose *pursued* and *pursuer* to be in full flight, and that pursuer is continually gaining upon pursued, until at last he comes up within, say a foot of him; suppose then pursuer opens wide his mouth, makes a desperate leap forward clean over pursued (somersaulting in the leap), and comes down

with his open mouth toward pursued's head. The whole trick is so rapidly and dexterously executed, that before the little fish knows anything about it, or has time to change his course, he finds himself sliding down the big one's throat."

No attention whatever was paid to these remarks by any one present; for Lucifer and his wife were so busily engaged packing their fish in the salting-tub that they could think of nothing else; and as to the doctor, the nearer he got the porgy up out of the trout's throat, the more intently interested he became in the job. Socrates saw this at a glance, and he was glad that it was so; for now his active mind had conjured up a better way yet for the trout to catch the minnow *head foremost*, and it was this. Let there be a mutual understanding between *two* trout; they go swimming along at some distance apart until they bring the unsuspecting minnow between them; then the two trout wheel, head to head, and one starts in pursuit, driving the minnow toward the other, who opens his wide mouth as the minnow draws near, which so frightens the minnow that he halts, wheels, and is instantly gobbled head foremost by the pursuer. But nothing was said about this *second* method, for possibly a third and still better one would be thought of by the time Doctor Skyelake should get the porgy out and be ready to listen.

"Really," said the doctor, as he drew the porgy from the trout's throat and held it up by its nose, "I can scarcely understand how a trout can manage to get the porgy down either head foremost or tail foremost, for this fellow made a close fit, to say nothing of his starting backwards."

After the fish were packed away, supper was prepared and eaten, and then the party seated themselves at the fireplace for another good social time; for both Lucifer and his wife had lost all their dread of the great man, and had got to be very fond of his company. And it was natural enough too that they should lose their dread, for all day long Doctor Skyelake had been as gentle as any lamb, and as genial and familiar as one could be. He had assisted at cleaning and packing away the fish; he had chopped wood and made up the fire; and more than once during the day he had taken the pail and brought it full of fresh water from the spring; and besides this, at leisure times, he had told several anecdotes, in such a manner as to make both Lucifer and Comfort almost crack

their sides laughing: and they had got to believing that ghosts were as nice people as living folks, if not nicer.

Lucifer sat at one end of the hearth and Comfort at the other, and both were smoking their pipes. Socrates sat near Comfort, facing the fire, and gazing up the chimney-flue; Doctor Skyelake's seat was between his and Lucifer's; and he did nothing but sit gazing from under the brim of his cap (which he generally wore in or out of the house) into the little bunched-up fire. And so, for a level half-hour, they all sat, and not one of the company uttered a single word in the time.

At last Lucifer, who had most of the time been contemplatively gazing into the doctor's face, broke the silence by asking that remarkable individual the question that he had been trying, unsuccessfully, to persuade his own mind to answer.

"Does dead folks *think* about the same way that live ones does?"

Doctor Skyelake neither answered the question nor changed his position in the least; not even did he turn away his eyes from the burning fagots in the chimney. He was to all appearance too deeply absorbed in his own thoughts to undertake to burden himself with others'. It was not a minute, though, after the question was asked before a strange voice, that seemed to come from the burning chunks, was heard to call, "Lucifer!"

Every one except the doctor started,—Lucifer half-way to his feet, Socrates forward, nearer the fire; and as for Comfort, she raised both her feet so suddenly and so high, and became so exactly poised upon the stool, that the weight of a feather would have tumbled her over backwards.

No sooner had they all settled themselves right again and were all gazing into the fire, than the same voice called, "Lucifer!" Socrates reached over Comfort's lap for the wooden poker that was standing in the corner, and with it he stirred the embers about, leaning forward as he did so, and looking in among them as if he were determined to find out what it was that had spoken, when for the third time the voice was heard,—

"Lucifer, I have called you three times!"

"I heerd you every time," said Lucifer, quaking as he spoke.

"Why, then, did you not answer?"

"I allers likes to know who it is that's callin' afore I answer," said Lucifer; "and I've been lookin' with all my eyes and ain't seen you yet."

"It's that cussed Blumudgin's head!" said Comfort. "I got it out o' the pan to-day with the skimmer and flung it backside o' the fire. It's a wonder it ain't got burnt up before now."

"Lucifer!" called the voice more solemnly than ever.

"I should say," said Socrates, turning his face nervously from the fire toward Lucifer, "that if you place any value whatever upon your wife, fireside, or friends, or if you expect evermore to fish for trout, you had better be preparing to make some sort of an answer, Lucifer."

"What!" said Lucifer in answer to the voice in the fire.

Doctor Skyelake started, raised his head high enough to look under his cap-brim into Lucifer's face, and for two minutes at least he did nothing but gaze mutely. Lucifer, Comfort, and Socrates started at the very instant the doctor did, and because he did; and while he continued to gaze into Lucifer's eyes, they were all as mutely and inquiringly gazing under his cap-brim into his eyes,—not an eye winked or wavered in that two minutes; a pin might have been heard to fall on the door-block.

"What?" asked Doctor Skyelake.

"I warn't talkin' to you," said Lucifer; "it's somebody there among the chunks."

"Lucifer," said the voice in the fire, "the great and profound man is about to ask you questions. Make true answers, unless you desire to be brought here and covered with these red-hot ashes as I am!"

"Speak truly, Lucifer," said Socrates; "for, from the tone of that warning, I doubt not the speaker is in earnest."

"Lucifer Grindle," said Doctor Skyelake, "tell me truly. Have you ever been at a place called North Banks?"

"There it is, *North Banks* ag'in!" said Comfort. "He's goin' to git mad!"

"Didn't you ask me that same yesterday?" asked Lucifer; "and didn't I tell you *yes*? Why, man, that's where I was bred and born and fotch up!"

"Be civil, Lucifer," said Socrates.

"Lucifer Grindle," said Doctor Skyelake, "when and why did you come here to live? and who came with you?"

Lucifer made no reply, for a suspicion flashed upon his mind that the questioner already knew the deepest secrets of his heart; he trembled as he sat there looking into his eyes.

"Let it all come and be over with, Lucifer," said Comfort, in great agitation; "open your mouth and let it come, or it'll come without your lettin'!"

Still Lucifer only sat and trembled and stared.

"Seems as he's deaf and dumb," said Comfort. "I'll tell you how it was."

"Tell on!" said the voice from the fire.

"Well, it's this way: It was nigh on to thirty years ago. *She* come and said there was money to be got by killin' 'em. He made b'lieve he'd go and help to do the killin' for a share of the money, and he went and fixed to git the youngun and bring it to me, and we fotch it over here, so *she* couldn't get her hands on it; fact is she thinks yet that Lucifer did kill it that night; but he didn't, for what he was after was to keep her from doin' it."

Doctor Skyelake sprang to his feet. He was amazed now in good earnest. "*Thirty years ago?*" he asked. But, without waiting for reply, he snatched the knife that Comfort had brought after scaling the fish and stuck into one of the logs over the hearth, and stood holding it upraised over Lucifer's head. His eyes were now blazing with passion and his whole frame was convulsed. "Villain!" he said; "and it was you that murdered the innocent child!"

"Wait, wait!" gasped Comfort, in an agony, as she fell on her knees between the irate man and her husband; "he didn't kill the youngun; nor he didn't aim to rob the man; nor to hurt him, neither. All he did was to git the youngun away and to blind *her* eyes!"

Doctor Skyelake's hand slowly descended to his side, and the knife fell from it to the floor.

Comfort took courage, Socrates drew a long breath, and Lucifer's eyes began to contract toward their natural size.

"Now you sees," said Comfort, "why we come over here to live; it was so she mightn't find out that the youngun hadn't been killed; for we knowed well enough if she should ever find out how it was she'd kill it,—if for nothin' but spite!"

"But you did kill it!" said Doctor Skyelake.

"Me? No; it's livin' yet, I guess."

"Living! Living! Oh, my God! Is my precious child still living! Oh, thank God! thank God!" As Doctor Skyelake said these words he sank down on the stool, covered his face with his hands, and wept aloud.

At seeing all this Socrates was amazed. He sat and stared. The great and profound philosopher was hanging his head and weeping like any child! At last it occurred to him that possibly he was subject to fits of lunacy; and full of this thought, he arose and went and stood before him, holding his hands behind his back and looking meekly down on the crown of the old man's head.

"Profound and venerated sir," he said at last, "I doubt not but that cruel blow inflicted by the stone-axe of Chickimicomocachie has caused you to be subject to fits of aberration of mind; and no wonder!—no wonder, sir! Permit me, then, to suggest that you go and lie on the bunk yonder and sleep; for I am sure it will be of benefit to you. Permit me to say that the child that Comfort and Lucifer have been talking about could not have been *yours*; for you will bear in mind that the occurrences related by them were at least a hundred and seventy-five years after your death. Now, I think, from the way you are affected, that the savage who killed you had, previously to killing you, killed a child of yours; and you were forcibly reminded of your loss by what has just been related. Do not then confound our friend Lucifer with the savage murderer of your child and yourself. True, there seems to be something dark about *this* affair of Lucifer's; but then, depend upon it, you have no *individual* interest in *this* matter; for I undertake to say positively that the child he speaks of was not yours."

Doctor Skyelake made no reply, but as soon as Socrates had made an end of speaking, he arose and paced rapidly back and forth across the floor for the space of ten minutes; then he came and stood before Lucifer (who, with the others, had been silently watching every step that he took), and in a mild but sorrowful tone said, "It was a poor defenceless man that you treated so cruelly, Lucifer; it was a dear little innocent that you stole away! You were the confederate of a bad, heartless woman!"

"Sure's you're born," said Comfort, "he warn't after

nothin' but savin' the youngun, which me and him did do. I hope you won't git into a notion to bust things up, for that's the truth of it, just like I tell you."

"Fear no harm," said the old man; "we will know more of the matter."

CHAPTER XXIX.

AT THE HEAD OF THE LAKE.

No sooner had François and Jeannot awakened from their long and peaceful slumbers (which, as has been said, was not until the sun had risen high on the next morning) than they set about them to learn what they could of the place to which they had come.

François was now fully confirmed in the belief that he had expressed to Jeannot,—that the course they had taken on the night before was, by an inland channel, almost directly toward the island upon which they had left old Basil. They were now nearly at the extreme head of a great lake. Before them and on each side were dense wildernesses. No signs of human habitation were anywhere seen, nor was there anything to show that the foot of man had ever before trod there. Behind them was but the broad sheet of glittering waters, bordered with marshes, and fringed with fields of green rushes. The shady forest reached away in one unbroken stretch fifty miles or more to the southward, taking in its scope Picture River and its branching streams, and Pine Island and Beech Island, and reedy prairies and bowers of cypress and juniper; continuing away still beyond these, over miles and miles of dark solitudes to other green bowers, and beautiful lakes, and reedy prairies.

"Truly, François," said Jeannot, "our situation is a most distressing one. I cannot see a ray leading out of the gloom that envelopes us, and I must admit that I am disposed to give up in despair, when I think of the hardships and sorrows that seem to be ever increasing and pressing down upon the lady and the dear children. François, I could not have been brought to believe that any woman could have borne up under such trials, and so patiently, too; but now, after she has groped

so long in the dreary darkness,—when we hoped for light, the darkness has but increased, and as I look into the starless future, I am much disposed to lose all heart.”

“No, Jeannot, no. I cannot think that you would despair; for I know you are no coward, and only a coward can become disheartened in such a case as ours. No; despair is the surest way that can be thought of to lose all. It matters not how black the darkness may be, if our path lead through it, let us go bravely on. True philosophy is, to be prepared for ills and reverses, even though the present may be bright and prosperous; they may not come at all, or they may come in such a shape or under such circumstances as to be easily overcome; or they may swoop down with the fierceness of the wintry tempest: but, let them come as they may, if we have taught ourselves to realize the fact that they *may* come, we will be, at least in some manner, prepared for them when they do come; and then, though they come with all their wild fury, they will not sweep us from the path, if that path be the path of rectitude: aye, though their fury be such as to overturn mountains, we shall not be crushed; for the faithful, hoping man fails not to have friends powerful enough to save him, be the threatened danger what it may. When darkness gathers deep around us, then come the demons thickest to assail us; but, though they have advantages, let us struggle on, fighting as we go; and fierce and powerful as they may be, they cannot overcome us, or prevent our passing on through the dreary vale to the land of light and beauty beyond it. If we stop and bewail our misfortunes, or if we turn back like cowards and fly, we will but be giving advantage to the foe, who will gloat mockingly at our confusion, or harass us in our ignoble flight. Speak not, then, of despairing. The true champion had rather die than to utter that dreadful word, *craven*. The sentinel who stands at his post of duty and dyes it with the last drop of blood from his heart,—he does not die,—he cannot die! Jeannot, we fill a high and honorable position,—one that we have voluntarily taken upon ourselves: we are protectors of the innocent and defenceless. Let us continue faithful, and if we must perish, let it be at the post of honor. Have you not observed how confidently the little children are looking forward to a brighter day? Have you not seen hope in the patient mother’s face? Mother and children lean upon us for

support and protection, and shall *we* despond? Suppose we despair? what, then, will be their case? I vow to the great God who has brought us safely where we are that while a spark of life remains I will not despair."

"Forgive my impatience, François," said Jeannot; "believe me, I feel for the lady and children as you do, and it is only on *their* account that I am at times disposed to despond; for I tell you truly my life is at their service."

"I know it, Jeannot; but we can serve them better by being hopeful and cheerful. Let us show them, by our energetic and earnest action, and by our pleasant faces, that we are working in faith and hope of a happy result."

"I do believe, François," said Paul, as he came running up to the tree under which the two men were standing, "that you have brought us to the prettiest place yet; we have all been sitting in the boat admiring it, and mamma says it is beautiful. I wonder if we could not catch pickerel here, as Jeannot and I did in the Arcade?"

"I think not," François answered; "the waters here are too broad and light; and, besides that, the fish here are no doubt generally different from those in the Arcade. The very best places for trolling are in narrow creeks, where the waters are deep and cool and fresh, and shaded by overhanging trees."

"But why are not the same kinds of fish in all fresh waters?" asked Paul; "the waters of this lake are fresh as well as those of the Arcade, and mamma says we are within twenty miles of that place by the water-course."

"Fish are not of the same species in all fresh waters," said François; "and, although the waters here and there are fresh, yet they are very much unlike in many respects. Here is a large scope of water, every part of which is exposed to the light and heat of the sun; again, although the scope here is so great, the waters are not more than one-half as deep as there. Here, with every rise of the tide, the brackish waters of the sounds come rushing in; here, the winds having full play, the waters are kept stirred and mixed with mud that rises from the bottom. The Arcade is but a few feet wide, and it is covered with thick trees; therefore its waters are always cool and dark; the creeklet is supplied by water that falls from the clouds, and runs from the lands into it; not a drop of the brackish sound-water ever reaching it. Again, its waters are

impregnated by matter contained in the leaves and roots over which they pass on their way to the little creeklet, and this matter changes both their color and taste. There are other differences besides these, so you see that although both are fresh, they are not by any means the same in qualities. Now, fish that live in creeks and swamps are not in all cases like those that inhabit broader waters; those that live in rivers differ from those in the sounds, and there is a vast difference between the fishes of the sounds and those of the seas and oceans. Then, again, those fish that live near the surface are unlike those that inhabit the depths beneath them, and those of one clime are unlike those of another."

"It is all very strange," said Paul, "and I wonder that I had never thought of it before, for now, since you have spoken of it, I can think of many things besides those you have mentioned that are fully as wonderful as they are. There are a great many kinds of fruits produced in one climate that are not in another; and there are many animals common to one climate that are unknown in another."

"There are even different races of *men*," said François, "and all unlike in many respects, in color, form, size, features of face, etc.; the Caucasian is white, the Mongolian yellow, the African black, the American Indian ash color, etc. In one place men are large, in another place of medium size, and in another place still they are mere pigmies. Nature, Paul, is variety itself. The food that is eaten in one climate could not be eaten, or if it could, would not support life, in another. The Esquimaux, who never saw an apple, or melon, or edible vegetable of any kind, will feast upon oil and blubber, while the principal articles of food of the inhabitants of the tropics are fruits and vegetables. Now consider the wise providence of God: fruits and vegetables are next to unknown in the frigid regions, but the fattest of fish and animals abound there; there are few fat fish or animals in hot regions, but *there* fruits and vegetables abound. In the coldest countries animals are provided with the thickest furs; in the warmest, they have but little fur. So everything is wisely adapted to the uses and conveniences of man, and even of animals to the very lowest order, wherever they may be."

"I shall think a great deal of what you have told me," said Paul.

"You could not take up a more beautiful study," said François. "The goodness of the Creator will be brought continually to your mind, as you will be continually discovering how admirably He has arranged everything, and how He has provided for even his humblest creatures. The cat and the owl, and many other creatures that prowl at night for their food, have eyes adapted to the darkness. The mole and other creatures that live underground have but the faintest sense of sight; and so those fishes that live in underground rivers and in the deep seas; but how acute are the senses of hearing and feeling of most of these! But really, we must wait for another time to talk of these things, for there is much for us to think of and do now that must not be put off."

"Do you think," asked Marie, as François came up to the boat, "that there is probability of our being followed to this place?"

"I apprehend no immediate danger," François answered; "for we are in an unfrequented and out-of-the-way place; and, besides that, our pursuers passed up the river. Yet I think it well for us to leave here as soon as we can do so, and for several reasons, the chief of which is that we must, if possible, be where we might see Basil's signals, if they should be made."

"I have been thinking of that," said Marie; "but how are we to see them, shut off, as we are, by the great wilderness from a view of the island?"

"I think," said François, "that, though shut off from the view, we are at no great distance from the sound-shore opposite the island. Either Jeannot or myself must lose no time in making our way through the woods; for, be the distance long or short, one of us must be at the sound-shore to-night, prepared to answer signals if any should be made."

"I offer myself as a volunteer for that duty, François," said Jeannot. "You must remain here; for here you can do much more good than I could, while I can go and look out for the signals as well as you could."

François expressed his entire willingness to go; but, Jeannot insisting, it was finally settled that he should go: so, providing himself with the axe and sun-glass and some provisions, he started off on his solitary way through the woods toward the sound-shore.

Jeannot had not gone exceeding a mile on the way before, to his great joy, he reached the head of the little creek ; this he traced along for about another mile, and then, sure enough, the broad sound came in view, and old Basil's island was before him.

When he had selected a place for his stand during the night, he kindled a little fire and made the necessary preparations for answering signals, if any should be made that night.

CHAPTER XXX.

PREPARING TO TAKE THE OVERLAND ROUTE.

THE sun was just beginning to gild the tips of the green steeples that towered here and there above the forest level as Jeannot returned on the next morning from the sound-shore.

Early as it was, the whole party at the lake had for some time been on the anxious lookout for him, and now they clustered around him and listened gladly as he told of having received a favorable signal from old Basil.

"Oh, how glad I am !" said Fawn. "Dear, dear Basil is safe, and has sent us good tidings !"

"Glad, too," said Timon, "that he has been informed of our safety."

"And glad," said Paul, "that we are so near to the sound."

"And so near to the head of the little creek," said François, smiling ; "for I think we shall be able to take our boat overland to it."

"Take the boat a mile through this dense woods, François ?" asked Lucie, in great surprise.

"Be quiet, dear children," said Marie, softly, as she pointed to a cluster of sweet myrtle at a little distance.

Fawn and Timon had gone there, and were kneeling, half concealed by the bushes ; his left arm was around her waist ; her right hand was resting on his shoulder ; they were thanking God for old Basil's safety. Soon the softly-uttered prayer was ended ; then they arose and kissed each other affectionately, and returned hand-in-hand.

"Come, Jeannot," said François, "we have a hard task before us, and the sooner we get at it the better."

"How will it be possible," asked Paul, "to take so heavy a boat as ours a mile through this dense woods? I do not understand how we are even to lift her from the water to the land. Is it possible, François, that you are going to attempt in earnest to take that boat a mile through this forest?"

"Good honest effort, Master Paul, sometimes accomplishes wonders. Now, I do not say that we *will* take the boat through the woods to the creek; but I do say that we will make an honest effort to do so, and I think we have good grounds to hope for success. It is not everything that *seems* impossible that *is* so."

The boat was then pushed on to the extreme head of the lake, and the whole party stepped out on the shore.

"Now, Jeannot," said François, "the first thing to be done is to build a railway. Take the axe and cut a dozen straight sticks of the size of your arm and about four feet long; also cut and trim smoothly a half-dozen long straight poles; also cut a dozen forks four feet long, and sharpen them, for they must be driven at least a foot into the ground. You, Paul, and Timon, can go and assist in bringing the lumber here, while I erect a purchase and make preparation for hoisting."

The boys went with Jeannot; and it was not long before they returned, lugging a long, straight pole.

"I know you are very busy, François," said Paul, as he laid his end of the pole on the ground, "but I am sure I shall be able to work better if you will explain something to me."

"What is it?" asked François.

"You said you were going to erect a purchase,—what is that?"

"The tripod arrangement lashed together at the top that I have stood up there near the head of the boat is a *purchase*. I have hooked a pulley-block into the lashing,—you see it hangs between the legs of the purchase."

"Yes; I see what you call a *pulley-block*."

"Well, here is another pulley-block. You will observe that each block has in it two grooved wheels that revolve on iron pins; each block has also a stout iron hook at one end of it. I am now going to *reeve* this rope in the blocks,—that is,

I am going to thread it *over* the wheels of the hanging block, and *under* those of this block. Now it is reeved; and this end of the rope is the *fall*; it is to be hauled upon when hoisting is to be done. But go, now; for Jeannot is calling you to come for the forks."

The boys then ran off; and they, with Jeannot, soon returned, bringing their arms full of railway material; and they continued to go and come until all the poles and forks were brought and scattered on the ground near the purchase.

"Now," said François, "we are ready to begin building our railway; it will necessarily be a crooked one, for I see that there are a number of big trees in the way that must be avoided by running around them, to the right or left. I will go on and clear the way; and while I am doing that, Jeannot, you can follow along, setting the forks firmly, and placing the poles upon them. Place the forks in pairs, three feet apart; and as the poles are long and stout, you can try the pairs at twenty feet distance along the track. At that distance apart the six pairs will reach one hundred and twenty feet along the track into the woods. You, Paul, and Timon, can follow along after me, and drag the bushes that I shall chop out of the track."

All then went busily at work; and not a question was asked by any one until they had got to the end of the one hundred and twenty feet; then they all went back to the boat.

"There, we have a section of our railway," said François. "Now let us lay the rollers across from pole to pole."

"It would seem to me," said Paul, "that we had better complete one thing before beginning another. I suppose this railway is to be a mile long; why not, then, cut enough poles and forks and rollers, and go on clearing the track to the creek, and get it all fixed as this *section* is, before we leave it?"

"I think we have plenty enough of forks and poles and rollers to take our boat to the creek," said François. "But ask no explanation now, Paul; for this is no light job that we have undertaken; and we shall have but little time to talk, at least until we give our work, so far done, a fair test. I hope we shall get well on the way toward the sound before night shall overtake us."

Paul said nothing; but twenty little questions stood side by

side in his eyes, swinging their arms and threatening every instant to leap out.

François smiled as he looked at the boy's face. "Be patient, Paul," he said. "Your own observation will teach you far more than my answers to questions that you might ask. I will say this much, however: our intention is to lift the boat from the water upon the railway, and roll her out to the end of the one hundred and twenty feet; then the forks that are now set will be pulled up and carried forward and set again, and the poles and rollers carried forward and put upon them as they are now; only two pairs of forks and two poles and a few rollers will be left for the boat to rest on until another section of the track is completed ahead; and so, the same operation will be repeated to the end."

"I should not have thought of that," said Paul, laughing heartily. "It will save the cutting of a great number of poles and forks and rollers; but would it not be better still to do away with the forks altogether and lay the poles along on the ground?"

"That would be much the better plan if we had clear level land before us; but see what a thick growth of bushes and reeds that we shall have to push our way through; it would be an immense work to clear them down smoothly to the ground."

"Yet, you will have to cut them down, I suppose," said Paul. "At any rate, you will have to chop off the tops of them; and I should think it would be just as easy to chop them off at the ground at once. Then, too, there would be no lifting of the heavy boat up on the *railway*."

"As to clearing the track," said François, "a hundred and twenty feet of it has got all the clearing that it will get."

"Why, François, the way is a mass of little bushes and high reeds. You have chopped away only a few of the stoutest bushes yet."

"You shall see," said François, "whether another reed or bush will be chopped in this section. But come, Jeannot, let us raise the boat on the ways and prepare to launch her on toward the creek. Get four pries; here are plenty of old, dead logs that will answer very well for fulcrums. I see, Paul, that you have a question at the end of your tongue. Let us have it before we begin the lift."

"How are we to draw the boat out of the water? How shall it ever be lifted up three feet on the *railway*?"

"Ah," said François, smiling, "that brings us to our straddle-legged *purchase*, and to our *fall-and-tackle*, and to our *pulley-blocks*. See the stout *eye* that is driven into the head of the boat; the painter is now tied into it, but we will put it to another use. There is a stout ring at the stern also. I have hooked the pulley-block to the eye in the bow. Do you think that you and Timon have sufficient strength to raise the bow of the boat up on the land?"

"Why, François," said Paul, "you know well enough that twenty like us could not do it!"

"Let us see about that. Come, Timon, and take hold of this *fall* with Paul. Now, both of you haul away. Now! Yo-ho! Here she comes! Yo-ho! There, that will do!"

All the time that the boys were hauling away they were looking up at the hanging block (François had purposely stood them with their backs toward the boat), watching the turning of the creaking wheels, and at the same time laughing heartily at François's yo-ho's.

"Now, let me hold the fall," said François, "while you look around, Master Paul, and see whether you and Timon have sufficient strength to draw the heavy boat from water to land."

The boys were both pleased and astonished; they had not only raised the bow clear of the water, but had drawn it in three feet or more over the land.

"Haul the painter taut, Jeannot, and make it fast around the body of that little tree, so as to hold her where she is when I ease away on the fall. Then bring a roller and put it under the bow, and I will let her come down upon it."

This all being done, and the bow eased down on the roller, François took the hook out of the eye, then slacked on the rope, and took the block in the boat and hooked it to the ring in the stern. "Now, Jeannot," he said, as he stepped back to shore, "*we* will haul away this time while the boys are resting."

In a few minutes the boat was high and dry on land.

"How do you think, Paul," asked Timon, "that she will ever be lifted up on the poles?"

"I cannot tell *how*," Paul answered; "but I have no doubt

she will be lying up there on the rollers in less than ten minutes."

"Do you know anything about the *lever* and *fulcrum*, boys?" François asked.

"Nothing," they both answered.

"These logs that Jeannot has laid along near the sides of the boat we will call fulcrums; the four poles that he is lifting in place by resting them on the fulcrums and letting the lower ends come under the boat's bottom we will call *levers*. Two of the levers are placed, you see, at opposite sides of the bow, and the two others at opposite sides of the stern. Now, you boys go to the ends of the bow levers and put your weight upon them, while Jeannot and I do the same thing here at the stern levers. We shall have to ask you, Fawn, and Lucie to roll those logs under the boat when we lift her high enough. Now, then, all together! Heave-o!" Then the levers were pressed down to the ground and the boat was raised more than a foot above it. Lucie and Fawn rolled the logs under, the four pries were eased up, and the boat was left resting on the logs. Then the children laughed until tears came into their eyes. Paul, especially, was delighted, and knew not what kind of antics to perform. "I do believe," he said, "that Timon and I could get her up the rest of the way without assistance. We would only have to raise the fulcrums higher, and lift one end at a time."

"No doubt of it," said François. "But as we must work now with all haste, we will all take a hand in it." In a few minutes the boat was lying upon the ways, ready to be launched along.

"We must contrive to keep as many as three rollers under the boat all the time," said François. "As she rolls on off one, it must be moved up to the front; and if we get about nimbly, I think we shall run her out to the end of this section without a single halt."

"But how is she to get through the reeds and bushes?" Paul asked.

"They are very limber at the height of three feet from the ground," said François, "and will bend forward so readily that we shall scarcely feel the resistance they offer. But now! here she goes!" And away went the boat rolling along over the rustling reeds; and in less than five minutes

from the time of starting she was at the other end of the section.

After that all was "plain sailing." Section after section of the *ways* was run out, winding now to the right and now to the left, so as to avoid the big trees and the thickest undergrowth; and long before night came on they had reached the *branch* that extended up from the head of the creek; and when night came on they were not exceeding a hundred yards from navigable waters.

Again Jeannot went on to the sound-shore to watch for Basil's signals; and François busied himself in arranging as comfortably as possible for the lady and children,—for there they must remain during the night.

"You seem to be distressed about something, Master Paul," said François, after Jeannot had gone off to the sound-shore. "What is it that disturbs you? Certainly you are not alarmed at having to spend the night here in the dark wilderness after your late experience?"

"No," said Paul; "but I have been wondering where mamma, and Lucie, and Fawn, and Murat, and the little baby are to rest to-night. As to Timon and I, a bed of leaves under one of the trees would answer very well for us; but I shall be sorry if mamma and the others have to lie on the ground."

"Trouble not yourself about that, my dear little boy," said François; "for I intend to prepare comfortable quarters not only for them, but for you and Timon also. When I shall raise the boat on an even keel, and chock the rollers and prop her securely, you will see that your quarters will be almost as snug and comfortable as if you were on the first floor of a good hotel."

After much lifting, and prying, and propping, and chocking, the boat was made to stand securely and firmly on her keel; then a rude flight of steps from the ground to the railway was made; the framework was put in place and the sail stretched over it; the moss-bed was spread smoothly out; and sure enough quite a comfortable sleeping-chamber was only awaiting to be occupied.

"Splendid!" Paul exclaimed. "We shall sleep like tops to-night!"

"It is a rude arrangement, madam, for you and the children,"

said François, as he descended from the boat; "but it is the best that can be made under the circumstances. I will go now and prepare a place for myself."

Marie and the children had not been in their snug resting-place exceeding an hour before Paul called out from his soft bed, "François!"

François, hearing the call, came and stood near the boat and asked, "Well; what is it that Master Paul wishes with me?"

"Only to tell you," said Paul, "that Timon and I are lying here covered with the skin of the great bear that you caught in the log-trap. It is real nice and comfortable; and it was very silly in me to be afraid of it as I was at first, you know."

"I am glad," said François, "that you have got to be a brave boy."

"But, François," said Paul, who was lying flat on his back, and could not, of course, see the person whom he was addressing, for he was in the bottom of the boat, and the gunwales were six or seven feet above the ground, "what is to become of *you* to-night?"

"I think I shall rest very comfortably," said François. "My sleeping-place is under the thick boughs of a great cypress-tree that stands about ten rods from here. I have made a scaffolding two feet above the ground, and floored it with poles; on these I have spread moss, torn down from the drooping limbs of the cypress. I was on the eve of retiring for the night when you called."

"I shall be there to see you very early in the morning," said Paul. "I have no doubt your bedstead is a very nice one, and I wish to see it. But then, François, you have no boat-sail for a covering as we have. Will you not be cold?"

"I have no sail, it is true," said François; "but you must remember that I will be under the thick branches of the tree, and, besides that, I have a great fire crackling and blazing near by *my* bed."

"A fire?" said Paul. "Where did you get fire? All the fire that I have seen to-day is that which Jeannot caught with the sun-glass; but I saw him with the burning sticks in his hand as he went off toward the sound. I am sure he took all the fire along with him."

"That is very true," said François; "yet I have a great fire blazing near my bed under the cypress."

"How did you get it?" asked Paul.

"It would require too long to explain that now," said François. "Wait until to-morrow and I will teach you how to get fire at night as well as in the daytime."

"I will wait until to-morrow," said Paul, after a considerable pause; "but I am sure that I shall not sleep a wink this whole night for wondering how fire may be made at night."

"Then, if it will cause you to sleep better," said François, "I must tell you *something* about it now. When Jeannot and I were rummaging under the bow of the boat and getting out the old fall-and-tackle, and other things that we have been using to-day, we found flint and steel and a piece of spunk about the size of a hen's egg."

"A piece of *what*?" Paul asked, as he raised up from his bed on his knees and poked his head out over the gunwale. "I never heard of any such thing before."

"Spunk," said François, "such as I have, is a light-brown, corky substance, that is got by cutting into the warty excrescences that are sometimes seen on diseased oaks. It is exceedingly dry and light, and may be broken or mashed into powder by the hand, and it is as readily cut with a sharp knife as cheese."

"What is it used for?" asked Paul.

"It is excellent tinder,—the least spark that touches it will kindle; it is therefore, under some circumstances, very convenient and useful. Hunters and travellers in unfrequented places are apt to have it along with them,—the spark, you know, is produced by the flint and steel."

"It is a very strange sort of stuff, I suppose," said Paul, "and I shall see it for myself in the morning. I thank you for telling me of it, François."

"François," said little Murat, popping his head out from under the sail, "won't you let me see it, too?"

"Certainly you shall see it, my dear little fellow."

François then went back to his place under the cypress, and the little boys laid themselves down again and covered themselves with the skins.

"Will the boat turn over to-night and drown us all if the wind blows hard, buddy?" asked Murat.

The only answer that was returned to the little boy's question for some time was a loud, merry laugh from every one of the children (for the conversation that Paul had been having with François had awakened them, and they had been lying there listening to it); even Marie joined in the laugh.

"Why, little Bobkins," said Paul, at last, and as soon as he could control his laughter sufficiently to speak, "we are not at sea!—all that we should do if this ship should turn over would be to tumble out on the dry ground! You have forgot since you took your nap where we are. Our boat is in the very middle of the high, dry forest, propped up on poles on François's railway, and we have all got up into it to go to sleep."

"Be quiet now, dear children," said Marie, "for it is full time that we were all asleep. You will not feel like working like a man to-morrow, as you have done to-day, Paul, unless you get a good rest to-night."

Paul snuggled himself down under the bear-skin very near to Timon, and was soon sleeping soundly.

CHAPTER XXXI.

PETER MASHEW.

"WAKE up! wake up, little Bobkins! Come here and see me plunge overboard!" Paul had risen from the moss bed, and was standing looking over the side of the boat as he spoke. He was first to awake; but now the sweet slumbers of every occupant of the boat were broken, and there was no more sleep for any of them that day.

"Oh, don't jump into the sea, buddy!" cried little Murat, in a great fright,— "don't jump into the sea, or you will be drowned!"

Paul laughed, and the woods around rung with the echoes. "Come here, Bobkins, and look over, and you will see that we are not in very deep water yet."

Murat arose and looked over the gunwale; for a time he was astonished at the boat's being stilted up over the dry land; but

when he came to remember the doings of the day before, he too began laughing heartily.

Then one after another the children clambered over the gunwale and descended to the ground.

Paul remembered what François had told him on the night before of his bedstead and bed, and about the spunk and the fire, and about the great moss-covered cypress; and forthwith he made his way toward the column of blue smoke that he saw streaming up into the trees at a little distance away.

"I thought from the loud laughing, that you were not far off, Paul," said François.

"What a nice bed and bedstead!" said Paul. "Where is the spunk, François?"

"This is it. Take it in your hand; isn't it soft and corky? Nip off a little piece with your thumb-nail and I will show you how to catch the spark to it."

François then whittled some dry shavings, and placing the little piece of spunk that Paul had broken off upon them, took the flint and steel and began striking fire. Every time the rasp was struck with the flint a shower of sparks would fall on the shavings, and at last one fell on the spunk and immediately ignited it. François began blowing this gently, and in a few minutes the shavings were blazing.

Jeannot had returned from the sound, and was sitting near the fire with François when the children came out from the boat.

"Did you get news from Basil?" asked Fawn.

"No, Fawn," Jeannot answered; "no signals were made last night."

"Oh, dear me!" said Fawn, in a distressed tone, "what can be the meaning of it?"

"It means," said Timon, encouragingly, "either that Basil had nothing new to tell us, or that he had not an opportunity to communicate safely. We must not be unreasonable, dear Fawn, and expect to hear from him every night; but we ought to be as patient as possible; for no doubt he will act wisely, and for the very best."

"Sensibly said, Timon," said François. "It may be days, nay, even weeks, before we shall hear from him again, and yet it is best that we continue on the lookout, ever hoping."

"But it is hard to be patient in such a case," said Fawn,

sorrowfully. "I know it is best to be patient and hopeful, and yet I am sure I shall be continually imagining that mischief has befallen him until we have the signals again."

"Having already had good tidings from him," said Jeannot, "I feel greatly encouraged, and I doubt not we shall again hear from him, and that before many days at most."

"Do come here!" exclaimed Paul, who had gone around to the other side of the great cypress, and was standing near its trunk; "here are bones, and a board attached to the tree with lettering upon it!"

Instantly the whole company hurried forward; and there, sure enough, were bones,—a human skeleton complete. It was sitting at the root of the tree and leaning against it. A few feet above the bare skull was a board, which was attached to the trunk of the tree with wooden pegs, upon which were several lines of carved lettering. Greatly were they all surprised. "Read it aloud, François," said Paul, "and let us hear what it is."

Then François read as follows:

PETER MASHEW
BORN A.D. 1705.

SHIPWRECKED
A.D. 1739.

DIED
A.D. 1761.

"Kind stranger! forty rods to the northward you will find my hut. Enter it: you will find a little tin box; it contains manuscript: read, and you will learn why I am here."

"Really," said François, "I had no idea that a human skeleton was resting beneath this green roof with me! Let us go immediately and look for the house and the little tin box; for I have a great desire to learn something about this strange matter."

The whole company then started off, pushing their way through the thick growth of reeds and bushes, and it was not long before they came to a pile of decaying boards and logs which was covered with a luxuriant growth of vines and briers.

"This," said François, "is no doubt the place, and the hut has tumbled down; let us remove the rubbish, and we shall probably find the box beneath it."

All hands set to work tearing away the vines, and pitching and dragging the logs and boards this way and that, and it

was not long before the floor (which was nothing but round logs placed side by side and half buried in the dirt) was reached, and there, in one corner, was found the box that they were in search of. The lid was made to hinge down and close tightly with a clasp; but now, after having laid there on the damp logs for so many years untouched, the clasp had become so rusted that it was some time before François succeeded in prying it off with his stout knife. The box was found to contain a roll of tolerably well-preserved manuscript; mouldy and rusty to some extent it is true, yet so plain and distinct still that almost every word of it could be read without difficulty. The sheets were written upon both sides, but the writing, which was executed neatly and in a round, legible hand, was, on one side, of a pale-yellowish color, while that on the other side was of a deep black.

It was evident at a glance that the opposite sides of the sheets were written at different periods of time, and that the subjects were different.

"Please go on with the reading, François," said Paul; "for we are all very anxious to know what it is about."

"No, not yet," Lucie said; "let us return to the tree where mamma is; I am sure she would like to hear it."

Following Lucie's suggestion, they returned to the cypress, where they found Marie anxiously awaiting their return. Then they all seated themselves on the grass near the skeleton, and François read the pages that were written with the yellow ink, as follows:

"I, that lean with my back against the great mossy cypress, am PETER MASHEW. Read these pages, and you will have the sad but true history of the latter years of my life.

"I have lived in this wilderness since A.D. 1739,—twenty-two years! In April of that year I was cast upon the sea-coast, near the inlet, which is about an east course from this place, and not more than ten or twelve miles distant. I am the survivor of thirty-three persons, including the ship's crew of twenty-four, and am one of nine passengers who were on our way from Rio Janeiro, in Brazil, to a European port, the name of which it is needless here to give.

"Of the other eight passengers, my wife, one of the noblest and best women that ever breathed the breath of life, was one, and my two boys—one ten and the other eight years old

—were others. The other five had been utter strangers to us up to the time that we embarked together at Rio, in the early part of March, 1739.

“I have said that we were on our way to Europe. Our home was in Europe, and yet it is needless to say in what part of it; for friends and relatives there have long ago mourned our loss, and why should their mourning be renewed?

“The storm that wrecked our ship continued increasing in violence for six days. A terrible storm indeed it was; and ah! sad was the ruin it brought to me! After the fourth day, the ship, that had been under a severe strain for so long a time, sprang aleak. All hands worked manfully day and night, but all to no purpose, for the water gained in the ship continually. A large part of the freight was thrown into the sea, but even that did no good, and our craft continued to sink deeper and deeper into the water. We had some faint hope that we should be saved yet, until the sixth day of the storm came; early on that morning the coast appeared in view, and then all hope departed, for the ship was full of water and unmanageable, and it was now but a matter of time with her, for she must go to the beach, and wind and wave combined were bearing her rapidly there.

“My dear little boys clung to me and their mother, and for a long time they did nothing but look up into our sad faces and weep bitterly.

“‘Oh, dear father! dear mother!’ the larger boy would say, ‘are you both going to die in the dark sea? Is there no hope that you will be saved and reach home?’

“The smaller boy would cease crying and sobbing at times, and say, ‘Dear papa! you are strong; can you not get mamma safely to shore?’

“My wife would answer them for me, for I was speechless. Her words to them would be something like this: ‘Precious little boys, we must all die; but there are no storms in heaven; and we shall soon be there.’ Oh, how she would press them, sobbing and heart-broken as they were, to her precious bosom! Noble woman! though the winds and waters so raged around her, she was calm, placid, peaceful to the last.

“We were in the cabin, expecting momentarily that the ship would be dashed into atoms. My wife and children and my-

self were embracing. (Ah, though the last, it was a sweet embrace!) My boys were calmer than they had been.

“ ‘Are you afraid to die, my boys?’ asked their mother.

“ ‘No,’ they both answered; ‘but, dear mamma and papa! must you both die too?’

“ ‘Yes, darlings,’ said my wife; ‘but let us all be resigned to our Father’s will.’

“ ‘Are you afraid to die, papa?’ asked the larger boy, looking up into my face and smiling sweetly as he spoke.

“ I made no reply. My wife came closer into my bosom. She looked up into my face, with an angel smile upon hers as she did so. Though her lips spoke not, her eyes, I thought, asked the same question that my boy had asked. My baby boy too was looking up at me,—there was anxiety in his face. I spoke then for the first time. ‘No, my precious wife and children! God knows that I am resigned and willing to die!—nay, death would be my preference if, by my dying, you could be saved,—death is my choice if you too must die; for life would be but a burden without you!’

“ No sooner had I uttered these words than the ship was dropped by a billow on the reef and broken into fragments. I was stunned by the crash; but I came to when my head arose out of the water. Still I was firmly clasping my wife and children. We were then very near the shore. Oh, possibly we might yet be saved!—if not with *all*, I might reach the shore with one or other of them; but which one should it be? I clung to them all; I could not part with one of them. I had them all with me, and we would be saved together or die together. We sank again; and again I became unconscious. How long I continued so I know not; for when I came to myself again, I was lying high up on the beach, with all my dear family still in my arms. I arose and laid them—cold and limber as they were—side by side on the sand, out of reach of the billows. Oh, how rejoiced I was! for *I* was alive, and were *they* not also? But they stirred not. I rubbed them; I took them, one by one, again and again, and pressed them to my bosom,—it was warmer than theirs,—but they breathed not; their beautiful heads drooped still! I became crazed; but then I remembered the calm, sweet face of my wife before we were cast into the sea, and in my agony I resolved that I

would be calm too. Again I took upon my bosom my dear ones, one by one, and rubbed them, and breathed into their mouths, and tried every means that I could think of to resuscitate them. Still they continued cold; still they drooped and hung limberly as I lifted them to my bosom.

“For hours I sat there with them hoping,—aye, hoping for hours. The shades of evening came gloaming over the desolate coast; still I sat there on the sand hoping,—hoping now against hope. The deep blackness of night settled around me. I raised the three loved heads higher upon my breast, and held them all together within the circle of my arms. I strained my eyes, trying to see the precious faces; but the darkness was too deep for that. Then I screamed; raved; called their names aloud; but even my own voice was but faintly heard by myself. Then I became calm again,—madly calm,—yet still gazing, gazing, gazing down toward the faces that were resting upon my bosom. They could have been seen as well if I had been stone-blind.

“At last that long night passed; and as the day began to dawn, I caught a faint glimpse of my sweet faces. Oh, how I screamed and yelled for joy! But the joy passed when the light of day came, and I realized for a certainty that wife and children were dead, and that I was their survivor. *They, all, gone!—I, alone!*

“The instant I realized the terrible truth (for I had not suffered myself to believe it before) I became again calm. Ever since that instant I have been calm,—*calm!* So calm that I myself have wondered a thousand times why it was that I continued to be *so calm*; but no answer has ever come to my wondering question,—it is unanswered yet; and as I write this I am calm, though I feel that death is near, reaching his hands for me.

“The storm lulled; the rude dwellers on the coast came near me, and saw me sitting there on the sand quietly, holding my dear ones in my arms. Sometimes they would group around me. Many a terrible frown was cast upon me; many a vulgar jibe,—many a loud laugh was heard; but I sat silently, fearlessly looking upon them. They knew I feared them not! I saw them, after they had looked at us enough, scatter away about the hard beach. I watched them as they walked up and down, gathering up the things that had washed

ashore from the wreck, and that were still continually coming on with the waves.

"They had forgotten me and mine: they passed and re-passed, scarcely once looking toward us. Gradually they moved farther and farther away down the beach, for they had secured all that was near me, and were following the current, that was bearing southward and beaching the fragments of the ship, and bales and packages, all along for miles and miles away. And miles and miles away from us they passed. I watched as long as I could see them, but to me all was a blank,—a senseless show of moving figures that interested me not. I looked merely because my eyes must rest somewhere.

"The day had almost passed again, and still I was sitting there as I had been for twenty-four hours past. I had made no calculations, arranged no plans of action whatever. Twilight began to gather again around us, then I saw the figure of a single human being approaching; it was one of those rough, weather-beaten men like I had seen many of in the morning. He came and planted himself a few feet before us, and looked straight into my face. I gazed as straight back into his. I would not have flinched had he drawn the knife from the sheath at his side and plunged it into my heart. *No; I was calm still!*

"'How long, crazy fool, are you going to sit here in this way?' he asked, gruffly. 'Ain't you hungry? Don't you want me to bury these for you?'

"I spoke for the first time. There seemed to be sympathy in the rough tones. 'Can you show me, friend,' I asked, 'a spot that I can go to where human eyes will never again behold these or me?'

"'No trouble about that,' he said; 'they can be buried deep; and if you will sit here a spell longer you'll starve, and then there will be a chance to bury you deep, too. I guess no one won't take the trouble to dig down to look at any of you.'

"I remained silent for a time, and then I repeated the question.

"'Yes, yes,' he said, with a laugh; 'if you want to hide, I guess I can p'int you to a place where it would be a job to find you, even if any one should take a notion to look,—

which nobody wouldn't do, 'cept it should be as big a fool as you is.'

" 'Is that place far away?' I asked.

" 'Oh, no,' he said; 'I guess I can run to it in my cunner, with this wind, in an hour or such a matter. Ha, ha! if you want to go to a place where nobody won't never see you no more, that's it.'

" 'Will you take me there?' I asked.

" 'Take you there!'

" 'Yes; I have the means to pay you for your trouble.'

" 'You'd better go to my house with me,' he said; 'and not be sich a fool as to want to go and hide from everybody, or to stay here and starve, either.'

" 'Will you not take me there?' I asked again.

" 'Why, yes,' he said, after a moment's consideration; 'I guess I'll 'commodate you; but you'd better stay. Body's Island is a lonesome enough place most of the time. All these folks that you've been seein' to-day lives way up the beach yonder, in the woods; they don't never cross the inlet to come over here, 'cept when there's a wreck, like there is now. They'll be comin' over now for two or three days longer, or until everything is picked up, and then maybe they won't be back in six months. If you're after getting into a lonesome place, go into one of these old hulls, and I think it'll do for you.'

" 'Here is money,' I said, taking a handful of gold out of my pocket; 'take us to the place you spoke of; take all this money, for I shall have no further need for it.'

" 'When do you want to start?' he asked.

" 'Now.'

" 'Now! It is night, near about! I can find a shelter for you to-night, and we can run over soon to-morrow.'

" 'No,' I said; 'now!'

" He seemed to consider a moment. 'It's goin' to be dark to-night! There'll be work to do, too, before starting; we'll have to bury these dead ones——'

" 'No!' said I; 'these will go with me; they are my family, and I shall never be separated from them.'

" 'Les be off, then,' he said; 'for it's about night now, and it's a mile over to the cunner.'

" 'In what direction from here is your boat?' I asked, as I

struggled to my feet, still holding all my precious ones in my arms.

“ ‘She’s in the inlet, about a mile to the no’th of us. If all these is to go, let me have the ’oman and one of the boys to tote. I guess I can git along through the sand with ’em better than what you can. You can take the least boy, can’t you?’ ”

“ ‘I will take them all.’ ”

“ ‘Man, you can’t do it!’ he said; ‘you’ve never waded much in sand like this, I guess.’ ”

“ ‘I can take them,’ I said; ‘go on ahead, and get the boat in readiness; I will be with you soon.’ ”

“He went on. I placed my little boys on my shoulders, their heads hanging upon my back; then, clasping my arms around their legs and my wife’s body, I arose again to my feet, after several efforts, and went on. Slowly, and with tottering steps at first, for I was cramped and stiff, but still I went on. Not once did I halt until I had reached the boat, and carefully, and tenderly laid my treasures side by side in its bottom. Then I felt that I had lost the power to breathe, after the violent exertions that I had made. In this state I was as I kneeled near my wife and smoothed her long dark hair from her face. I am sure I breathed not once for several minutes. I heard the man drawing the anchor and spriting the sail, and shipping the rudder; then I heard the sheets rattle across the thwarts as he drew away upon them; but I heard no more, for I was now lying senseless at my wife’s side, with one of my hands still resting upon her cold forehead.

“But even this was not death for me, for I revived in time to hear the sounds made by the boat’s bottom scraping on the sands, and the rattling of the bow as it went pushing into the sedge at the shore to which we had been aiming. At first I knew not where I was; but in a moment the recollection of the recent past flashed upon my mind, and I knew that I was at the side of my wife. I raised my hand from her forehead, reached it over her, and placed it on the heads of first one, then the other of my boys. We were all there.

“ ‘Are you dead?’ the man asked.

“ ‘No. Is this the place?’ ”

“ ‘Yes; this is Croatan. Are you still in a mind to get

out? If you starts back into this woods, like as not you'll never come out no more! S'posen we goes back?"

" 'I will get out,' I said. I did get out. Never has it been darker than it was that night. I tore up armsful of the rushes and grass and made a bed of it in a dry place, a few feet from the boat's bow; then, one by one, I took my wife and children in my arms and carried them out of the boat and laid them on the rush-bed that I had spread for them.

" 'If you'll go back with me,' said the man, in a tone of pity, 'I'll fix a place for you to stay at. This ain't no place for a human cretur to undertake to stay at. You won't live a week in here!'

" 'The place suits me well,' I said.

" 'Well,' he said, 'if you *will* stay, here's a skiff you may have. I've towed it over for you; maybe you'll git in a notion to come back to the beach, and she'll do for you to come in. When it gits light enough you'll see that you ain't far from the mouth of a little creek. I've put in the skiff for you fishin'-tackle, a knife, an axe, tinder-box, flint and steel, a piece of old sail, some rope, some cooked wittles that I've had in this boat all day, and other things. Do what you're a mind to with 'em.'

" Then I heard his sails flapping, for he was shoving his boat out and turning her around towards the coast. Fainter and fainter became the noises made by the boat as she passed away; then all was still except the rustling of the rushes, the sighing of the wind through the trees, and the sound of waves dashing to shore.

" I knew that I could not make my way into the dark wilderness at night with the heavy burden; so I sat down on the rush-bed, and remained there without closing my eyes or uttering a sound until the light of day broke around me. I had intended that as soon as the day should dawn I would get up and go away back from the shore; so, when it got light enough to see anything, I arose for the purpose of carrying out these intentions. But it was too dark yet; I should gain by waiting; so I sat down again to wait until the light should find its way in under the thick branches. But almost instantly, after taking my seat, I fell into a deep sleep, from which I did not awake until the sun (which was now in a clear sky) was sinking low in the west. Again I rose to my feet;

now all before me was distinctly visible. There, a few feet off, was the sound-shore; away yonder across the water were the great hills of sand on the coast, glittering now in the light of the sinking sun. On my left hand as I stood was a sandy bluff, on my right the mouth of the creek, and before me the skiff that I had forgotten about, tied to the shore. I stood on my tip-toes and looked over the sedge into it, and there were the axe, the fishing-rods, the paddle, and other things. Instantly I changed my plans. I would paddle up the creek in the skiff; and after I had gone as far as she would float, I would get out on the land and make my way farther back on foot. No time was to be lost, for night would soon be at hand again; so, after placing my wife and children in the skiff, I got in, paddled into the creek, and came on until I got abreast of the tree under which I am sitting. Then again I changed my mind; for here already was a place that the foot of man, I was sure, seldom or never trod; it was weird and dreary in the twilight then, and, oh, what a strange gladness thrilled my heart that I had come to such a place!

“There I sat in the boat until the coming of another day. Early in the morning I stepped out on the shore, tied the skiff, took my family out, and brought them, one after another, and laid them side by side at the very spot where I am now dying. Then, after breaking off a number of mossy branches from the tree and placing them over my loved ones, I went back to the place where my hut now stands in search of a new resting-place, for I thought if I should remain so near the creek-shore some one might stray that way and discover me, and I had determined to avoid the sight of men evermore if possible. That spot suited me. I gathered moss and made a bed of it under some trees; then returned to the place where I had left my wife and children, and carried them and laid them side by side on the moss-bed.

“All that day I did nothing but sit and look upon them, and at night I laid down beside them and slept soundly; but when I awakened again I felt exceedingly faint and hungry, for I had not tasted food for three days. My first determination was to remain there and die, but the craving for food overcame me, and I arose and, after covering my dear ones with branches, went down to the skiff, and there discovered what I had not before observed,—a covered bucket containing bread and meat

and fish; of this I ate heartily, and after that I felt stronger, happier!

"For weeks together my life was to sit by my dear ones and watch, day and night; never sleeping during the night, and always, when day came, lying down beside them and sleeping until afternoon; then I would go catch some fish out of the creek and eat them raw.

"Gradually the bodies changed their appearance; gradually the flesh began to fall away from the bones. In time there were but three skeletons lying there side by side; yet, night after night for a whole year, I sat and watched by them; for dear were those green, mouldy bones to me. Storm and rain and lightning, winter with its ice and snow, spring with its green and flowers, summer with its hot breath,—all these came upon me one after another; still, through the nights, I sat upon the bed of moss by my precious ones and watched.

"Exposure and the hard living, instead of injuring me, seemed to give me new life, and I began to feel stronger, bodily, than I had ever before felt. The bones were mouldering sadly. Would death delay his coming for me until after they should crumble and mix with the dust? It came into my mind to build a shelter over them. So I took my axe and went earnestly at the work. The logs were notched and put up; the roof was raised, but those bones were not once disturbed; not an inch have they been removed from the place where I at first placed them. They have been quietly lying there for more than twenty-two years.

"Kind stranger, you may ask me, Why did you come here to die under this cypress? Why did you at last leave your dear ones? In the hope, I answer, that you would chance to see my bones sitting here, and that you would take them back and put them beside my loved ones; then raise a rude mound over us all. Do this, and the great God in heaven will bless you for the kind deed!"

CHAPTER XXXII.

FRANÇOIS READS THE DIARY.

THE attentive listeners that were grouped near François were deeply affected at what they had heard him read. Tears were streaming down the faces of some of them; and as to Paul, he leaned his forehead against the tree and sobbed aloud.

"Did you see anything of the bones of the poor man's wife and children?" asked Marie. "Possibly, though, they have crumbled into dust, for it has been a long time since they died."

"We saw no bones," said Jeannot; "but we had cleared the rubbish away from only a small part of the floor when Fawn discovered the box. I have no doubt some of them may yet be found; for although it has been a long time since they died, yet, during much of the time, they have been under shelter."

"Let us proceed forthwith," said François, "to perform our sad duty. Go, Jeannot, and bring three thwarts out of the boat, while I prepare a frame for the bier, to take the skeleton away upon."

"What kind of frame will you prepare?" asked Lucie.

"A very rude one," said François, "for we can prepare no other,—two little poles with the thwarts laid upon them."

The boards were brought and put in place; then the skeleton of poor Peter Mashew was laid upon the rude bier, and the two men bore it on to the hut, followed by all the rest in silent procession. Upon arriving at the place the bier was put down and the rubbish was thrown off the log floor.

"Here are the bones!" said Jeannot, "lying, no doubt, exactly as the bodies were laid when the flesh was upon them. I was afraid that the fallen logs had crushed them, but this side of the hut seems to have fallen outward, and only the light roof has come down over them. The moss-bed has disappeared; but, see! the spot occupied by the bodies has never

been floored,—they were not disturbed even to be placed upon a floor. Here are the bones of mother and sons; their heads were no doubt on the same moss pillow. How sad was their fate!”

“How the kind father loved his wife and little boys!” said Lucie. “Oh, I am so glad that it has fallen to our lot to bring that dear father and place him at the side of his loved family!”

The bones of Peter Mashew were then laid along at the right side of his wife, and his left arm was so arranged as to have resting upon it the heads of his wife and both his boys.

“Shall we now cover them, madam?” asked François, addressing Marie.

“Let each of us first drop upon them a sprig of this beautiful green juniper,” she said; “then they may be hid from view, and we will leave them alone in their silent resting-place.”

All were pleased at the suggestion. The green sprigs were brought and dropped upon the bones; logs were laid along and covered with the old boards; then a mound of dirt was thrown upon them and rounded over smoothly, and the party returned to their boat.

“Mamma,” said Paul, who was holding his mother’s hand as they returned, “where do you think Peter Mashew got the little tin box, and the paper and pen and ink?”

“I have been asking myself the same question,” she replied. “It cannot certainly be told, of course, where he got them; but I believe it has long been a custom with gentlemen who travel about the world to carry such things about their persons, so as to be prepared at all times to jot down memoranda of interest to them. Probably Mr. Mashew brought these from Rio Janeiro for that purpose. This box was certainly well suited to such a purpose, for it might be conveniently carried in a coat-pocket, and the paper in it could be kept smooth and unsoiled. As to pens, *they* may be had anywhere, for quite a good pen may be made of a hard reed or stick. The greatest difficulty about the matter, in such a place as this, would be, I should think, to obtain writing fluid of the proper sort. You will observe how pale and yellow these pages are that François has just read: no doubt the ink was of a very inferior quality; in all probability it has changed from black or purple to its present color since the writing; and no doubt if it should be exposed to the strong light of the sun for a few

hours, the writing would fade out and leave the pages entirely blank ; nay, it is probable that if the papers should be often taken from the box to be read, all trace of the ink would disappear in a very few years."

"I have no doubt, madam," said François, "but that you are correct in everything that you have said. Here, in a corner of the box, is a place for a pen ; and this little apartment, of the dimensions of a cubic inch, where the lid hinges, must have been intended to contain ink. This yellow fluid was made, I should say, of the acid juice of some vegetable that grows here in the forest. No doubt the pages that I have not yet read were written first, and on shipboard ; for they are of good black ink, and seem to be in the style of a diary. It may be that they give some account of the voyage before the coming on of the storm, and throw further light upon the history of the man and his family."

"Please read those pages to us, François," asked Lucie.

"Yes," said Paul, "we will all sit down here by the boat and listen, and after you get through we will all be ready to go to work. It will not delay us long."

François, who was as desirous to know the contents of the paper as the rest, again opened it and read :

* * * * *

"March 2, A.D. 1739.—Left Rio de Janeiro this morning at eight o'clock. Bright skies ; fair, light breeze. Beatrice joyous at the prospect of soon meeting with dear relatives and friends at home after a two years' absence,—Beatrice, though,—God bless her!—is always joyous. Ned and Harry have been romping over the cabin ever since we have been on board ; they are happy little fellows. God grant that we may have a quick and pleasant voyage !

"March 3.—Little Harry sat to-day for hours near the tiller, and watched the great shark that followed in the wake of our ship. One of the passengers asked Ned this morning if he were not afraid to sail out on the broad ocean. He answered promptly in substance as follows : 'I am not afraid, nor would I be if storms were to arise ; for God is able to save us however hard the wind may blow, and however deep and dark and rough the sea may be.' 'But,' said the passenger, 'many stout ships are lost with all on board.' 'I know,' Ned answered, 'that ships are often lost at sea ; but those that trust

in God cannot be lost, though they may be drowned.' I had been reading, and even now my eyes were on the page; but I could but listen to what was being said; my heart was full, and I was thankful for my noble boy. Beatrice, too, heard the conversation, though she was looking out of the cabin window all the time, and as soon as she could get an opportunity, she pressed the dear little fellow to her bosom and kissed his forehead. 'God bless my precious boy!' she said, softly. I glanced up from the page toward her (for I heard the words, softly as they were said); her beautiful eyes were full of tears; and how sweet the expression on her face when she kissed that broad forehead!

"March 4.—The captain of the ship informed us at noon to-day that we had got three hundred miles on our way, and were making eight knots. The passengers are very pleasant people; they were utter strangers to us a few days ago; but one to see us now, might think that we had been raised from infancy under the same roof.

"March 5.—The ship has been rolling considerably to-day. Six of the nine passengers, including Beatrice and Ned, have been deathly sick for hours. So far, Harry and I stand it out like men. On our voyage from Europe to South America, two years ago, Beatrice was sick half the time, and I greatly fear that she will fare no better on this our return passage. I am never sea-sick unless the water should be unusually rough.

"March 6.—The sea is smoother to-day. Beatrice and Ned are much better. We crossed the equator to-day at five minutes past noon. Harry had been told by the captain (who by the way is a kind, clever gentleman) that we should cross the equinoctial line at about the middle of the day, and forthwith, after hearing that, the little fellow seated himself near the tiller, and began his quiet faithful lookout *for the line*. He was sadly disappointed, after an hour and a half's patient watching, at being informed by the captain that the line was imaginary, and that we had crossed it half an hour before. 'I thought I should see a great line stretched across the sea,' the boy said, in reply to the captain, who had asked what sort of a line he had supposed the equinoctial to be. 'And how did you think we should get over it?' the captain asked. 'I could not think of any other way than to cut it,' the little boy answered.

" March 7, 8, 9.—Almost a dead calm. The sea is now (12 M., March 9) as smooth as glass, but it rolls high. Poor Beatrice is again very sick.

" March 10.—The wind has breezed up after us; we are making good headway. Both Beatrice and Ned sick.

" March 11.—Blowing heavily. I have to give my whole time and attention to the sick ones. Harry also sick.

" March 25.—It has been storming ever since the 11th, but we have been making excellent time; for, for two weeks the wind has been quartering on the stern. I have had but little good rest, for all the passengers except myself have been suffering severely from sea-sickness. Poor Beatrice!—The captain says we crossed the Tropic of Cancer at 6 A.M. on yesterday.

" April 3.—Very calm most of the time since 25th ult., but heavy sea rolling continually. Beatrice says that nothing can ever induce her to undertake a long ocean voyage again. She is much better to-day. Ned and Harry have entirely recovered, and both of them have voracious appetites.

" April 4.—Cold, S. E. wind; ship making splendid time.

" April 5.—Wind E.; we are flying along under short sail.

" April 6.—One thousand miles north of the Tropic of Cancer. I fear Beatrice will continue to be sick during the whole voyage. Dear wife, I wish it could be otherwise! How delighted was Beatrice when the captain told her this morning that if the winds continue fair we shall be home in three weeks!

" April 8.—Lat. 40.18, lon. 51.24, at 9 A.M. So says the ship's log. Wind dead ahead, and blowing fresh. 9 P.M.—Skies more dismal than I ever beheld them; ship laboring. Our officers and crew are brave men, who understand their duty and are ready to perform it.

" April 9.—Not a wink did I sleep during the past night; the passengers are becoming very uneasy. Officers and crew say but little, still, they are *cheerful*. The storm increases in violence continually. Oh, the appearance of the ocean is magnificent! glorious! stupendous! Never before have my eyes beheld anything so grand! so terrible!

" April 10.—Sunrise. No sleep for me yet, except about an hour on yesterday. The tempest is terrific, and no signs of a lull. The ship is scudding under bare poles toward the American coast; officers and crew weary; passengers noisy and des-

pondent. Beatrice, dear Beatrice, strange to say, she has recovered entirely; her quiet, happy face is the light of the cabin. 10 A.M.—A lady passenger, who has been moaning and screaming incessantly for hours past, has become insane. Oh, how wild her actions! and how she screams with laughter! A great sea has just burst over the decks,—five of the crew were swept away by it! 6 P.M.—Another great sea!—the chief mate and six more men gone! Twelve are on deck! Oh, what a dreary night is setting in! Nine are locked in the cabin. Poor frantic lady! she lies on the floor dying! The beautiful face of my Beatrice is as placid as a summer evening's sky. Bless her noble soul! Oh, the grandeur of a brave good woman; the heavenly halo that hangs around her and increases in brilliancy as the darkness in every direction deepens and intensifies! My little boys are sobbing and moaning and embracing their mother and sad father. Beatrice has her arm around my waist; she speaks encouragingly to all, —soothingly to her little boys. Oh, I am struggling to follow the example of my brave wife! My heart is agonized. I cannot do as she does. The ship reels from side to side. I am the only one in the cabin that knows that she has been leaking badly for two days. The great billows are now continually rolling over the decks. Not a man is left upon them! all have been swept off, and eight living passengers locked in the cabin!"

"Oh, why have you ceased to read, François?" asked Lucie, in a tremulous voice. "What of those eight?"

"I have read all," said François. "The pages in yellow ink that I read first follow these in time. They complete the sad story that comes to so abrupt a close on these."

"Poor, dear people!" said Fawn. "All drowned but him that we have just buried; and he rendered miserable for the rest of his life from the sad day of the wreck."

"Knowing what these poor creatures suffered," said Marie, "and comparing our situation with theirs, we ought to be patient."

"Dear mamma," said little Murat, "I am so tired of waiting for papa! When shall we see him?"

Then she that had been counselling patience sighed deeply; and spite of her courage, tears came trickling out on her face.

"Come, Jeannot," said François, in a cheerful tone, "we

have quite a job before us to-day, and it is now growing late; let us be at work. We shall expect, Paul, that you and Timon work like *men* to-day."

"And you will not be disappointed," said Paul. "We are ready now to begin. What shall we do first, François?"

"Bring forward the forks and poles and rollers," said François. "We have now but about twenty rods farther to take the boat before we can launch her on the *deep* again."

In less than an hour from the time the work began the boat was at the margin of the creek, only waiting to be let down into the water.

"I suppose she is all ready now to be tumbled off the ways," said Paul.

"We don't propose to *tumble her off*, Paul," said François. "The tumbling process might be the quickest, but as it would be rather rough on our boat, we shall get to work with pry and fulcrum again; and I have no doubt we shall *ease* her down and have her floating gracefully in her element in less time than ten minutes." Nor was François mistaken, for within that time the party had taken their seats in the boat, and were all ready to start down the creek toward the sound.

"François," said Paul, "I don't think that I shall ever despair of accomplishing what I may undertake at any and all times during the rest of my life. Whatever the task may be I shall not give it up, but in the darkest time that may come I will look back and think of what you and Jeannot have done in these two days and move on. Who but you would ever have undertaken to bring this heavy boat a mile through a dense forest like this? Who would have done the work so well and in so short a time? Really, I have learned a good lesson! and that is, to persevere and hope."

"Master Paul," said François, "if in these two days you have learned to meet difficulties bravely, and to be cheerful and hopeful and patient when they are upon you, the lesson is indeed profitable, and will serve you well."

The men put their oars out, and it was not long before they reached the mouth of the creek, and had the line of coast, the broad sounds, and old Basil's island all in full view,—all gleaming and glittering in the light of the setting sun.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

WAITING FOR THE SIGNALS.

"YONDER," said Paul, "is the very tree under which we concealed ourselves and the boat a few nights ago; I know it by its thick boughs that droop down to the water. Had we not better go and get under it again, François?"

"I think not," François replied; "the tree answered well enough as a hiding-place at night; but I should not feel altogether safe under it in the daytime, even though its boughs do droop to the water. Here on our left is a tiny creeklet, not much wider than our boat; we would probably be as safe in it as anywhere on this whole shore; for, no doubt, it winds back fifty or sixty yards among the high rushes of the marsh. Let us turn into it, Jeannot, and reconnoitre."

The boat was pushed into the little creeklet, and far enough up to shut off from the view Peter Mashew's creek. The occupants of the boat were now completely surrounded by high rushes; and while they continued sitting on the thwarts, everything was concealed by the rushes from view except the blue sky overhead.

"It would be the merest accident," said Jeannot, "if those who are on the lookout for us should find us here; for there are probably hundreds of little streams like the one we are in that run up into the marshes all along this shore; and, certainly, they would never undertake to trace them all up to their sources. I am sure we would not find a safer place to hide at if we were to trace the shore along for ten miles. Stand on the thwart, Paul, and, if you are tall enough, look out over the rushes."

Paul stepped up on the thwart, and by raising himself on tiptoe, and stretching up his neck as high as he could get it, managed to bring his eyes above the tops of the rushes. There again before him were the sounds, the coast, and the island. "It is not only a good place to hide at," said Paul, "but a

good place to watch from ; for yonder is the island, and we should be sure to see the signals as soon as made."

"We will remain here," said François ; "but bear in mind that it is highly important that we should continue to be very quiet, especially when night shall come on ; for our enemies may even now be near by and on the lookout for us ; and, if so, they might creep upon us before we should be aware of it, especially after the darkness shall gather around us. The least noise, the least thumping on the boat, might be fatal to us. Remember, then, that we must be more quiet and cautious even than we have been at any time before."

"I am sure that none of us will forget to be quiet," said Paul, "for it would be a very dreadful thing if those bad people should find us out. I know they would kill every one of us !"

"It is *such* a nice place," said Fawn, as she stood on the seat and looked out. "We can *all* stand on the seats and watch out for the signals now. Oh, how I hope we shall see them to-night !"

As soon as night began to cast its shadows around the fugitives François and Jeannot went to work spreading the sail over the frame-work, so that Marie and the children might be sheltered from the night dews and chilly air. Then Fawn and Lucie busied themselves spreading smoothly the moss-bed on the dry bottom of the boat, and arranging the furs and skins to be used as covering during the night.

"I never should have believed," said Paul, as he sat himself down in the middle of the soft bed, "that it was so easy a matter to fix up a little boat into so comfortable a sleeping chamber. Now that the thwarts are taken away there is abundance of room ; and then our roof extends down and completely shuts us in. Come this way, little Bobkins, and lie down here, and see what a nice soft bed we have ; it is as soft as feathers."

Murat, who, when spoken to, was sitting at the side of his mother, in the extreme end of the boat, got up ; but, instead of *walking* to his brother, as another boy might have done, he made two somersaults, one immediately after the other, the last one of which carried him across the outstretched legs of Paul, and brought him flat on his back, with his head on Paul's lap.

"Well! that was the best guess that ever was made!" said Paul, laughing merrily. "Here you are, you little limber-jack, with your head on my lap and both heels cocked up on the gunwales! I declare, you are a funny little tadpole!"

"Remember, Master Paul," said François,—who, with Jeannot, was sitting at the stern outside the awning,—“it will not do for you to be so merry, for dark night is near at hand now, and those bad men may be near us, too.”

"François," said Paul, almost convulsed, "I can't help laughing, to save my life, to see the antics of the little monkey that we have got in here! You ought just to come and lift the curtain and peep under at him. Oh, me, he is so funny!"

"Mind you, little Mr. Monkey," said François, chuckling as he spoke, "you must not be so funny."

Jeannot laughed outright; which being heard by the children, every one of them took their hands from their mouths, where they had been holding them to press back the laughter that was struggling to burst forth, and in a moment the happy concert of merry peals might have been heard far out in the sound.

"My precious little children," said Marie, "we must be quiet now, for it is growing dark, and those who wish us harm may be near by."

"François," said Paul, "how are Lucie and Fawn and Timon and I to watch for Basil's signals to-night, covered up as we are by this awning? Can you not cut some holes in the top of it large enough for us to get our heads through?"

"I do not think it would be acting wisely, Master Paul, to spoil our sail merely to gratify your curiosity. You may be sure that Jeannot and I will keep a sharp lookout, and if signals should be made after you get to sleep, we will wake you, and then it will be an easy matter for you to raise the curtain and come out here. Don't suffer your mind to be disturbed in the least, for I promise you all that if signals should be made to-night you shall see them."

Soon quiet reigned. No sound was heard except the gentle breathing of the little sleepers that lay on the moss-bed beneath the shelter. Even Jeannot, whose watch was to be through the latter part of the night, had snuggled himself down on the stern seat and was slumbering.

At times François would arise to his feet and look out to-

ward the island. From the island, where all was dreariness, his eyes would wander up into the clear skies. Busy would thought be then ; for, while his eyes wander slowly through the starry fields, other views than these are before him,—the panorama of scenes through which he had passed,—pictures of life from childhood to the present,—the line of his pathway all along. At times that pathway is seen winding away through flowery mead and field ; at times through sterile plains ; over precipitous mountains. Again, it comes winding down to green valleys, then along by the blue streamlet's shores, through budding bowers, whose blossoms load the air with sweetest perfumes. Deserts again are reached, and cliffs, and cold, bleak precipices. The picture ceases to unroll, for now the dreariest range of all is reached, and he is struggling up the steeps, clinging to jagged edges of the rocks, hanging o'er dark abysses, looking toward the height still o'er his head, and toiling on to reach the cloud-veiled peaks. Ah, the vicissitudes of earthly life ! How soon, after leaving the scenes that are passing beautiful, may wastes of dreary desolation rise in view ; and it may be the pathway now leads through these ! The pictures vanish ; François remembers that he is on the lookout for Basil's signal, but no signal yet !

Calm are the waters : the island sleeps upon their peaceful bosom. The world is slumbering beneath the high-arched canopy of starry blue. Yonder away the dark line of sea-coast is dimly seen ; nearer, the island toward which hope is ever pointing. Above that island hang a thousand glittering orbs, and in their midst resplendent Jupiter. From the low east bright Sirius is arising ; through middle skies the Hyades float on, and Aldebaran floods the way with light. Orion, most glorious of the myriad hosts of sky, advances firmly through the azure field and bravely baits the Bull : they climb the starry steep. The cloudy rim of Milky-Way curves like a rainbow o'er the western woods ; Lyra sits like a blazing lamp upon horizon's verge ; and broad-winged Cygnus hovers near. Bootes with his nimble hounds has chased from upper sky the Greater Bear, and Pegasus goes swooping down the jewelled slope. At times an aerolite streams on in rapid flight, then in an instant vanishes. At times a silvery meteor bursts up from the blue depths—full grown and gloriously brilliant at its coming—and sweeps along in queenly majesty

across the jewel-studded vault, tracing its silver pathway on the blue, then bursting, falling in a starry shower.

All is still. No sound,—except the flipping of the mullet in the near waters,—except the occasional leap and plunge of the sturgeon out in the channel,—except at long intervals the barking of a dog on the distant island,—except now and then the hoot and demoniac laugh of the owl away back in the wilderness,—all still but these.

Hours pass. Chanticleer is heard crowing on the land beyond the waters; it is midnight. The watchman stands and listens until the crowing has ceased. Soon other sounds are heard by him. He steps up on the thwart; leans forward with hand to ear; then strains his eyes peering earnestly through the darkness, as if he might see an object miles and miles away out in the broad Albemarle at midnight on a moonless night. Those sounds are the rumbling of oars; they become more and more distinct, until it seems that the boat has got abreast of the watchman, and is not more than a mile away; the boat passes on, away and away in the direction of the coast, and again the sounds are but faintly heard; then the watchman stoops and calls, in an undertone, “Jeannot! Jeannot!”

Jeannot springs to his feet: “Oh, it is time to relieve you. What a delightful rest I have had! About what hour have we, François?”

“It is an hour past midnight; but listen! Do you hear the sound of oars in the distance?”

“Oars? yes,—away toward the coast!”

“I have been listening for an hour. The boat came from the direction of the broad river and passed on by toward the coast. Our pursuers no doubt are returning.”

Soon the sound ceased to be heard; then François laid himself down, and in a few minutes was asleep.

For an hour Jeannot stood and looked upon the quiet scenes. *His* eyes too were turned toward the glittering skies, and he too had thoughts of the past, but his mind was more disposed to busy itself with the present. What of old Basil? why had he not spoken again? The second night was drawing to its close and no tidings from him,—why was that? Suppose evil had indeed overtaken him, what would be done then? and where then would be François’s ground for hope? He

raised his hands and pressed them upon his temples; it was a sad thought: what would become of Fawn and Timon if old Basil should never again return!

But while these gloomy thoughts were passing through Jeannot's mind a brilliant light beamed forth from the island. The watchman started, as if wondering what it could be, and yet it was what he had been anxiously hoping to see for hours past. Old Basil was telling glad tidings.

"François! François! François!" he called,—“awake and stand up! See, old Basil speaks to us!”

François sprang to his feet and looked out. “Yes, he speaks! Come, Fawn, Paul, Lucie, Timon! come forth and see how brightly is beaming old Basil's signal!”

“Oh, dear, dear Basil!” Fawn exclaimed as she came out from under the awning. “It is his signal! it is his signal!”

“Had we not better make *immediate* answer?” Marie asked, in a voice tremulous with gladness. “He may think that we are not here to answer him.”

“Be sure, madam,” said Jeannot, “he would wait a long time for an answer; but François has caught the spark, and it will not be long before he will hear from us.”

“Oh,” said Lucie, clapping her hands, “isn't it glad, glad news! Never came light with more gladness in it.”

“Come here! come here!” screamed Murat, who had just awakened, and was terribly frightened at making the discovery that they had all gone and left him alone. “Come here!”

“Don't be frightened, dear little Bobkins,” said Paul, who, as he spoke, was standing on tiptoe on the seat looking over the rushes at the light,—“don't be frightened; we are all here looking out at old Basil's bright signal. Come here, and I will hold you high enough to see it.”

Instantly the little fellow came crawling and stumbling out. “Where is Paul? where is Paul? I want to go to Paul and be held up.”

“You will be more certain to see the light if *I* hold you up,” said Jeannot, as he took the little fellow into his arms, “for I believe that it is about all Master Paul can do by standing on tiptoe and stretching up his head to see it for himself; and besides, I much question that he is as strong as he thinks he is.”

“Yes,” said Paul, who had not once turned his eyes away from the light, nor let himself down from tiptoe, “I think you

had better stay there with Jeannot, for I question, sure enough, that I should get you high enough: Jeannot is taller than I am."

"Here goes our answer," said François, as he held the blazing fagots on high. "I warrant he will see it."

Old Basil's light then began to wave back and forth.

"What means that?" asked Paul.

"The old man is greeting us with cheers," said François.

"It is happy news that he is telling us."

Soon the light at the island disappeared, and François extinguished his.

For a full half-hour after Marie and the children had returned beneath their shelter nothing could be heard but the laughing and jabbering, in a suppressed tone, of the happy little ones; but one after another their voices ceased to be heard, until again all was quiet as it had been before they came forth.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

ICEBERGS.

FOR three whole days Kate Weathers had been continually on the lookout for the return of Stam and the party that had started off with him in pursuit of the boat that it was supposed contained Pedro's gang and the family of Pierre. The fourth night after their departure in Len Curt's boat was now far advanced, and yet no tidings. What if they had been overpowered and murdered by the desperadoes!

For hours Kate had been lying in the bunk with Gilsey and the baby; but thought had been ever on the chase of thought through her mind, and there was no rest for her. Not a moment had she slept. Long ago the hour of midnight had passed, still she lay there in the darkness thinking; when suddenly she started at hearing the sounds of approaching feet grinding through the loose sands of the path; then the door of the hut was opened, and one stepped lightly in.

"Is that you, Stam?" she asked, in a tremulous voice.

"Yes, it's me. Is you 'wake yet, Kate?"

"I ain't been to sleep a minit, Stam. I can't sleep."

"What's the matter? Has anything pestered you? or is the youngun bad off again?"

"No, it ain't that; nothing ain't pestered me; and the youngun's near about well,—he's pickin' up all the time; ever since I laid him down here soon in the night he's been sleepin' as good as can be. No, it ain't nothin' like that, Stam; but somehow I've got to thinkin' and thinkin', and all I can do is to lay here and think, think, think. I've had near about everything in my mind to-night: sometimes it would be Ike Drew: and how dark and stormy it was when he driv me out to look for you; then the Portagee and his gang,—I'd think maybe they had killed you all; then ag'in I'd git to studyin' about hell, and how bad it would be to have to go there and live all the time, where it's always black and stormy; presently that pretty one that got wrecked here a long time ago would come into my mind, and I'd think over what she told me so many times about heaven, and how purty everything is there where the good angels lives. Ah me! I wish I could think of all that purty one told me about; but it's been a long, long time ago. It's sich as that, Stam, that's been runnin' in my mind. But ain't you heerd nothin' about the stranger's folks since you've been gone?"

"Just about nothin', Kate. We've been movin' here and there all the time, watchin' the best we knowed how, night and day; but it seems they've slipped us, after all."

"Where is the others that went off with you?"

"They're on Collinton Island. You see, Kate, the next day after we went off, Sol glimpsed the boat of them we are after movin' around Croatan. Well, we pushed on, but that's the last that has been seed, though we know that they ain't far from Croatan yet. So we made it up to run across in the night to Collinton, where we could have a fair sight of Croatan and Durant's Island and all that shore, and keep a watch out, and maybe after things should git quiet ag'in we might see 'em movin' about enough to spot the place where they're hid. After puttin' the others out at Collinton I run back, and has been hangin' around Durant's Island ever since last night; and now I've come from there to see how things was goin' with you and the youngun."

"S'posen," said Kate, in a half-frightened tone, as she

stepped from the bunk and advanced toward her husband, "it should be found out where they is hid, would ther' be any handlin' of that Portagee and his gang, Stam?"

"No tellin', Kate; but when four men that's risolute, and that's after doin' the right thing, makes fight, they can stand a long time if it should be ag'inst big odds. You see we've got the right side, and we knows it, and the Portagee and gang has got the wrong side, and they knows it. No tellin', Kate, what would be the eend of it; but we'd do the best we could."

Stam and his wife were occupying the low stools, side by side, before the flickering blaze that had been kindled on the hearth. For some time after Stam spoke they both sat silently, both busy with their own deep thoughts; at last Kate spoke:

"Stam, I'm tired of staying here on North Banks; I wants to go and live somewheres else. Can't we fix to go off, Stam? Can't we go when it's found out about the stranger's folks? It seems there ain't no peace here where nothin' ain't studied about but wrecks and sich. There's a better way to live than this, I know there is; and I wants that we shall go away from here. I'm afeerd, Stam, we shan't never git to heaven from North Banks. Can't we fix to go off when this gits over?"

"What's got you into sich a notion for goin' to heaven, Kate?"

"I don't know, Stam; I don't know! I've been studyin' about it so much since you went off. I didn't know as you'd ever come back here to us ag'in. Somehow I didn't feel right about nothin'. The stranger says heaven's a nice place, where ther' ain't no fussin' and carryin' on like there is here on North Banks, and where it ain't never dark like it is here sometimes; and where there ain't no wrecks, and no folks gittin' drownded, and no dead ones rollin' up on the beach. When he seed me cryin' about my pretty babies that Jim went and drownded, he told me they was livin' in heaven, and waitin' for me and you to come. Oh, Stam, I wants that we shall go there and be with them! I can't forgit my pretty ones, Stam! my pretty little younguns, that's gone and left me! I come nigh on to dyin' when they went off; but I'm glad I didn't; for then you'd a been here all sorter by yourself, and I know you wants me to stay with you. But there's better places than this for us. Can't we fix to go, Stam? Can't we go and look for some place where sich as Jim Beam

don't live? Oh! oh! oh! what made Jim take and kill my pretty little younguns? Oh, it made me so glad when I had 'em,—when I hugged 'em up in my arms! They's gone! gone! gone! and left me! Oh, Stam, what made Jim kill my pretty little ones?"

Poor Kate! long had she writhed under the torturing lash of grief; hard had been the struggle with life; but she did struggle nobly, for she loved her husband. She did strive to hide her sorrows in her deep heart, for she knew how dearly that husband loved her. She knew that his heart, too, was writhing and bleeding, and she must be strong now. She was faint and weak, yet she must bear up; and even while the poisoned arrow was rankling in her own bosom, she must bring healing balms and place them on his wounds, or well she knew that the strong man would faint and fall. Poor Stam! how prone were the flames of passion to kindle and fire his heart! Yet, well Kate knew how brave, how noble, how generous her husband was. He that would rush to the attack with all the fury and fierceness of a tiger was a mere child in her weak hand; that weak hand could stay him from the object of his fierce wrath. She knew that the bond of love, though delicate as the gossamer's glittering web, was strong enough to hold the giant fast; aye, that its sheeny twine had power, however frenzied he might be by wounds, to stay him safely fettered at her bosom. But now, in her deep grief, she forgets a time to watch. She lifts the crushing burden from her heart and shares it with her captive. Poor, sorrowing mother! who else may ease her of the load? As she spoke she covered her face with her hands, and bowing low her head, she wept bitterly. "Oh, Stam, what made him take and kill my pretty ones?"

Too deeply now she was buried in her own sorrows to observe for some moments that her husband had sprung from her side to his feet, and was standing and looking grimly down upon her.

"Kate!" he said, speaking through his clinched teeth, "don't—don't—never say no more about that devil! It makes me cuss the willian that's now in hell! Kate! Kate! I can't help it, Kate,—I can't help but cuss him! You wants me to go to heaven with you, where my babies is,—I know you does, Kate! but I can't—I can't—I can't help it! Damn him that drowned my babies!"

"Oh, Stam! Stam! Stam!" cried Kate, wringing her hands in an agony, "God won't listen when we asks Him to do for us if you takes on so! And then, maybe, we shan't never, never, never see the pretty ones no more! never see 'em no more! never no more!"

As she spoke these words, Kate was kneeling on the floor before her husband and looking up into his face,—looking wildly, pleadingly, as if her prayer for pity and for mercy must be directed first to him.

Stam stood there mute. Still he was looking fiercely down,—now into the pleading, agonized face. His bosom heaved as heaves the torrid plain before the earthquake rends it. The flames of passion that were burning in his deep eyes threw their ghastly light out on the darkness of his wrinkled brow. Thus she kneeled, thus he stood: both for a time as mute as if death had come and placed his cold hands on their hearts and chilled them into ice. But slowly and gradually those horrid fires that so glowed in his eyes die out; slowly and gradually the wrinkles that were deep on his brow smooth down; slowly and gradually the dark cloud passes away and away, and then a convulsive sigh comes forth from the strong man's deep bosom; he spoke,—

"Kate!"

She answered not, nor stirred she from her place; but tears arose in her eyes and came flooding out on her cheeks. She sobbed now, but still the dimmed eyes turned not from his.

"Kate, our babies is in heaven; you've told me so, and I b'lieves it. You'll see 'em there, I guess, if I don't. Kate, I'm thinkin' it's goin' to be a hard thing for me to git there. When you goes to 'em, tell 'em I wanted to come. You knows that's so."

"Oh, Stam," said Kate, "we will both go,—both! I know I shouldn't never feel right if I was there and you warn't. We will *both* go. Oh, Stam, can't we go off from this place? It'll be better for us if we does."

"I'd go off, Kate; but where? How should I git somethin' for us to eat and wear among strangers? What should I do off from the water?"

"You can l'arn to do somethin', Stam, and Gilsey and me can help you. When we gits among strangers we can look

about and see how others does, and we can l'arn to do like them,—I know we can. Le's go, Stam."

"Maybe it moughtn't be as easy work as you think, Kate; things won't be like they is here, where we can git fish when we wants 'em, and where we can git chance at wrecks every now and then. If we goes off, all we gits will have to come other ways, and how will that be?"

"Le's go where there ain't no wrecks, Stam. I don't never want to eat nothin' that comes from wrecks, nor to wear none o' the things neither,—never no more. But, Stam, I know there'll be a way for us to git what we needs, for others that lives off from the beach gits what's needed, and we can l'arn their ways."

Sounds of voices were now heard as of several persons approaching, and Stam hurried to the door and looked out. The first waves of morning's sunlight were flooding over the green thicket and neighboring hill-tops. Sweet music, too, was there. A mocking-bird sat on the top sprig of the stunted live-oak near the chimney, and was warbling her morning orisons.

"Who is it comin'?" asked Kate. "Sounds like strangers."

"I'm tryin' to make 'em out," Stam answered; "but I can't see plain yet, for they are in the shadiest part o' the path."

Kate went and stood in the door beside her husband. "Did you ever see sich a beard?" she said, in a whisper. "Ain't that foremost one Daddy Lucifer, Stam?"

"Does look like him," said Stam; "but, then, who's them other two behind him?"

"They're all lookin' straight this way now," said Kate. "Did ever you see sich queer folks? Yes, it's Daddy Lucifer, and he's p'intin' at us."

"There's where they used to live," said Lucifer Grindle, addressing Doctor Skyelake (for the three persons were Lucifer, Doctor Skyelake, and Socrates Junior); "but I can't say whether they lives there now or no, for the people, as well as the things, changes about mightily here on North Banks."

"This is the place where the man lived who took me across to the island in his boat more than a year ago," said Socrates. "He is a rough specimen, doctor, but he has a great big heart in his bosom for all that. A noble fellow, and I shall never forget his kind treatment of me. I was very wet, very cold, very hungry; he dried me, warmed me, fed me. But, be-

sides all that, I shall never forget his kindness for taking me over to your house, good Lucifer Grindle; and if——”

“Hold back the rest of what you’ve got to say for another time, Socrates,” said Lucifer; “for here we is about at the house, and there stands Stam and Kate in the door. Stam,” continued Lucifer, as the trio of old men halted in a row before the hut-door, “this here one with the long beard is Doctor Skyelake, that’s been dead and buried up’ards o’ two thousan’ year.”

“Two *hundred*, not thousand,” said Socrates.

“Well, two *hundred*. I knowed it was a good spell, but I’d forgot the odd years. He said he wanted that I should fetch him over here to see you, Kate; and you see I’ve fotch him.”

“To see *me*?” asked Kate, in astonishment. “I ain’t never knowed him as I knows on!”

“I have seen you,” said Doctor Skyelake, in a tremulous voice, “and I thank God that I am permitted again to see you!”

“Maybe, Kate,” said Lucifer, “you’ve seed him a many a time and didn’t know it. He’s a dead man, Kate, much as he looks like he’s livin’! It’s him that come over from furrin parts a long spell ago in four wessels——”

“In *two* vessels,” said Socrates.

“Well, *two*, then. I knowed it took more’n one to fetch him. It’s him, Kate, that diskivered the worruld——”

“No! no!” said Socrates, impatiently, “it was Roanoke Island that he discovered, not the *world*; but he *recovered*, reformed, resuscitated, and relightened the world by his philosophy and splendid theories, especially that of the world’s shape and motions.”

“He got his brains beat up into mush by a bloody Injine by name of Chicken-Hatchet,” Lucifer continued.

“Lucifer!” said Socrates, solemnly, “have you not heard me pronounce the name of the cruel chief enough to learn it yet? It was not *Chicken-Hatchet* that murdered the great man, but Chick-i-mi-com-o-cach-ie.”

“That’s it sure enough,” said Lucifer. “And it’s him, Kate, that found out how much fire comes from the sun and moon every twenty-four hours, and how many years it’ll be before the whole world shall git red-hot, and before the sea

gits to bilin' over like a kittle, and puttin' the fire out, and raisin' sich a steam as——"

"I undertake to say, sir!" said Socrates, indignantly, "that the great Doctor Skyelake *found out no such things!* and, highly as I have heretofore valued your friendship, Lucifer Grindle, I would——"

"Jes think of it, Kate!" said Lucifer, after he had waited, as he thought, a sufficient time for Socrates to get through,— "just think,—red-hot! Hanged if them won't be dancin' times! My blessed!—red-hot!"

It would be difficult to convey in words an idea of the expression that was upon Socrates' face while Lucifer was uttering these last words, and at the same time stepping about exactly as one might be supposed to step whose pathway leads over a bed of living, glowing coals. But imagine the artist, busy and intently engaged at the task of making the most beautiful and delicate artificial flowers; his whole soul seems to be in the work of imitating nature; he has completed the substantial stem and graceful leaves, and is now earnestly intent touching the last of the well-formed petals with delicate tints, when a sudden crash of thunder peals forth, and instantly the beautiful work that was almost completed is daubed with the paint that he has been breathing, as it were, on his flowers. Look into that artist's face! its expression is the same as was that on the face of Socrates Junior when Lucifer Grindle uttered that last *red-hot!*

"Lucifer!" said Socrates, as soon as he recovered the powers of utterance, "I undertake to say, sir——"

"Forget not, Socrates," interposed Doctor Skyelake, "the teachings of the great Epictetus, with which I am sure you are familiar."

Socrates paused as suddenly as if he had been shot, made a profound bow to the great man, wheeled back to the place from whence he had come, and never so much as opened his lips to complete the sentence that he had begun.

"And he's the greatest man, Kate," continued Lucifer (who seemed greatly relieved at Socrates' silence), "that me and Comfort has ever seed; and we are nigh on to seventy year old."

"Ah! now you are speaking truly and to the point, friend Lucifer," said Socrates, smiling blandly; "no doubt of *that*, friend Lucifer!"

"But I ain't never heerd about him!" said Kate. "It ain't me, I guess, that he wants to see."

"Yes, child," said the old man, as tears rolled down his cheeks, "I have come to see *you*."

"Me!"

"Yes, Adele, you."

"Adele? Adele?" asked Kate, in a low voice, as if it was intended that herself should answer the question,—"*Adele? Stam*," she said, as she looked up into her husband's wondering face, "did I tell you that the pretty wrecked one called me Adele?"

"And do you still remember that pretty wrecked one?" asked Doctor Skyelake.

"Remember? Yes; it was she that put her hand on my head and told me about heaven and angels. Did *you* know her?"

"She loved you, Adele; she told you of heaven and angels. Yes, I knew her."

"Did she not kneel with me every day and ask God to love me? Did she not hold me on her bosom and kiss me, and point up into the blue sky and say that she was goin' to live there with the angels?"

"Yes, Adele."

"I knew her name once; but it has been so long, so long! What was the pretty one's name? Did you know her name?"

"Yes," sobbed the old man. "Was it not *Dear Mamma?*"

"Dear Mamma! Dear Mamma!" said Kate, trembling for joy. "Yes! yes! it was *Dear Mamma!* Oh, Stam! that is the name that I have tried so many, many times to tell you! Yes, it was *Dear Mamma!*"

Stam was bewildered. He gazed down into the face of his wife, now radiant and beaming with joy, then at the old man, who still stood there sobbing as a child. "Kate," he said, at last, "I know you've told me a many and many time about that pretty wrecked one; but I always took it that it was a dream you'd had; for I'm older'n you is, and I've seen more wrecks and more wrecked ones than what you is, but I ain't never seed that *pretty one*."

"Was it a dream?" she asked, as she looked up into the old man's face. "No, it warn't a dream."

"No, child; I knew that pretty one; it was no dream."

"Then where is she now?"

"In heaven, Adele."

"Yes, she is there. I saw the angels when they come for her. Did she not hold me to her bosom and kiss my lips and forehead before she went with them away up into the blue sky?"

"I was at her side then. She kissed you; then she placed you in my arms and blessed you. I never saw her more."

"Why did Dear Mamma love me?" asked Kate.

"She loved you as you love *your* babe. She was your mother."

"Mother!" said Kate, starting in surprise.

"It's like he says, Kate," said Lucifer. "You've been thinkin' I'm your daddy and Comfort's your mammy, but we ain't. Sure as a gun he's tellin' you right. He's a dead sperit, and he knows just about everything."

"Not so fast, Lucifer, not so fast," said Socrates. "Doctor Skyelake, though a great and profound philosopher, does not know everything,—without doubt his iceberg theory is incorrect. He says that icebergs are formed in the tempestuous seas that surround the poles in this manner: first a crust of ice is formed over the seas; then the storm comes and breaks up that crust, and the fragments are driven upon and against one another, and these freeze together; so in time, as fragment is piled on fragment, and fragment on fragment, great heaps are formed; over these heaps billows are continually dashing and breaking, causing the cracks and crevices of the pile to be filled with water, which instantly freezes, and then all the parts are knit and compacted together. After years and years of freezing and rolling about in the cold water, the great ice mountain looms up, and ever grows larger and larger, until it is driven at last out into the open and warmer sea; and then it is gradually melted and lost. This is Doctor Skyelake's theory of icebergs. But listen, and I promise you that I will explode it in six words,—*sea-water is salt; icebergs are fresh!*

"If other argument should be necessary, I would say that icebergs very often have spires and steeples that are often several hundred feet high; sometimes these icebergs resemble great crystal mosques and cathedrals, with rounded domes and slender spires and minarets that shoot high toward the clouds.

Did the freezing together of fragments of ice-crust and the dashing of billows over them form these? Preposterous!

"Now there are two ways to account for icebergs *reasonably*. The first is this: the lands that border these cold dark seas have many very high mountains and promontories that project and hang over them. During the long nights in Arctic regions immense quantities of snow fall, and pile high on the mountains and promontories; then when the long day comes on and the sun rises above the horizon these snows melt and pour down, forming great cakes of ice, that cling to the mountain-side, until their weight becomes so great that they tumble down into the sea beneath. These great cakes—mountains in themselves—form the iceberg's *base*. The waters that are continually pouring over the precipices fall upon the *base* beneath, freezing as they fall, until the pile has reached a great height. The water from the promontory does not tumble over in one wide sheet, but it streams over through numberless larger and smaller sluices, and these form the domes, and steeples, and turrets, and towers, and minarets.

"Now I defy any man to put his finger upon a single point that I have taken that is unreasonable or untenable.

"This is the other plausible theory. It is well known by scientists that about twenty-three millions of years ago this whole globe of land was contained within an envelope of water, ranging from fifteen to twenty-five miles deep."

"Ugh!" exclaimed Lucifer, "I'll bet you big fish was in fashion then!"

"It is also a well-known fact," continued Socrates, "that this great ocean, from some cause or other, became chilled to such a degree that it froze to its very bottom."

"I should say," interrupted Lucifer again, "that them that knowed how to slide and skeet had their own good times then, for there warn't no danger of breakin' through and gittin' drowned, neither."

Socrates paused and continued for the space of fifteen seconds to look sternly into Lucifer's simple face; at the end of which time he spoke, and said: "Neither animal nor vegetable life existed at that time; therefore there was no one to slide or skate either! The whole globe had the appearance of being a solid ball of clear, hard ice, and the vast period

of its continuance so is called *the ice age*. These ridiculous interjections annoy me much, Lucifer!

"But, as I was going on to say, after this great ocean had frozen to the bottom, the air above it began to get warmer (extremes, you know, doctor, are apt to produce extremes, and I have thought it probable that the intense cold that existed produced the heat that warmed the air); by degrees the ice melted and disappeared; and, in the course of from thirteen to seventeen millions of years (to say nothing of the fractions of millions), the great crystal envelope had wasted away to a mere mile in thickness."

"I guess the water dripped off, sorter, as it melted?" asked Lucifer.

"Please do not interrupt me again, friend Lucifer," said Socrates, very mildly, considering the great provocation he had to become desperately angry. "The simple questions that you ask not only break the thread of my discourse, but they annoy me, as I have said, much. If you were a scientist, you would know that the elements of water and of air are much the same. Possibly the disappearing water resolved itself into air, continually *deepening*, or extending upwards, making the great ocean of air in which we human fish swim. You would know, too, that the seas and oceans of the earth are continually becoming shallower. Your mind might soar then into the deep regions of probability and speculation, and probably you might calculate to a dot the very day in the future when there will not remain one drop of water upon this whole globe. But do me the kindness not to interrupt me again."

"I won't," said Lucifer; "go on; for all you're sayin' is mighty pretty. I should like to know what become of the fish when it friz. But go on."

"When the icy rind had wasted to a mere mile in thickness, as I was going on to say, many of the mountains and highest table-lands had succeeded in getting their heads out, and then puny animal and vegetable life began to make its appearance. Still, through the following three millions of years, the ice continued to *thin down*, until very much of the land on the globe came out high and dry. Still immense glaciers filled the valleys, and these went creeping down the declivities, in some instances grinding and levelling down, by their great weight and

force, the very mountains themselves, crushing into powder even granite heights that lay in their way, and dragging along with them great fragments of rock, which were sometimes of the weight of millions of tons,—so heavy, indeed, that they cut out, as they went scraping along, deep river channels, not only through the soft ground, but even through ridges of stone and iron. In some cases these huge boulders were transported thousands of miles, where they were dropped for the coming ages of man to regard as mountains of themselves.

“In time these glaciers dwindled and decreased to the thickness of only a few hundred yards. The unevenness of the country over which these passed caused them in some instances to bend and break into great blocks and billets. Some of these billets were pressed down into warmer seas and melted; others passed away into colder seas, and others again slipped down their slopes into the frigid oceans. These last are the icebergs of the present day.”

“Socrates!” said Doctor Skyelake, in admiration, “that glacier theory is equal in every respect to my pear theory!”

“It explains,” said Socrates, “very many things that the ignorant and uninformed are disposed to regard as inexplicable. You, doctor, I doubt not, are aware that these glaciers have not even yet entirely melted from the valleys. Some of them are moving still down the slope of the Alps and other great elevations, and it is probable that ages will elapse before these ice-rivers will give place to rushing waters. But time will be when there will not remain an ounce of ice upon this globe, and when it will be as warm at the poles as it is now at the equator.”

“I am frank to confess, Socrates,” said Doctor Skyelake, “that you have thoroughly convinced me that my iceberg theory is erroneous; hereafter I shall adopt one or the other, or both, of yours.”

“Great men,” said Socrates, humbly bowing, “are always frank; always generous; always open to conviction, and ready to admit error when convinced.”

“Hanged if I see into it yet!” said Lucifer. “Who knowed how deep the water was, and how thick the ice was? And then when it got to melting, what come of the water? Not that it makes any matter to me though, Socrates, for hanged if I hadn’t as lieve it was one way as another.”

CHAPTER XXXV.

AN INTRUDER.

No sooner had Lucifer expressed his opinion of the two theories of icebergs that Socrates had advanced, and declared his utter indifference as to whether either or both of them were correct, than every one of that strange assemblage started at the same instant as if they would jump out of their skins, at hearing a shrill, demoniac laugh burst forth almost in their very midst; then all eyes turned toward the chimney end of the hut, where was seen the head of an old woman peeping around the corner toward them.

Every one stood silently aghast; they did nothing but stare back into the wild eyes that were leering upon them.

Observing the impression that she had made upon those who saw her, the old creature stepped boldly out from her hiding-place, and laughed more shrilly than before.

No fury could have been better pictured. The sharp, fleshless face was lighted with an unwonted glow; the keenly glittering gray eyes were sunk deep in their sockets; the thin white hair, blowzed and tangled, hung down over her neck and shoulders, and partly concealed the face; and the wide, skinny mouth (now, as she laughed, half open) only added horror to the fiendish visage. In strange keeping with all this was the dress she wore of filthy shreds and tatters that reached not to her ankles, and covered only partially her shrivelled and emaciated person.

“Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha!” she laughed again. “So you’ve all got together and is havin’ a devil’s mess of it! I’ve been listenin’ all the time! And so she ain’t your child, ‘*Daddy Lucifer*?’ but was wrecked here a long spell ago; and you and Comfort has only been makin’ b’lieve she was your’n? Ha-ha-ha-ha! Well, I’ve been knowin’ that a long spell, Lucifer Grindle! a long spell! So you and Comfort runned away to the island because you was afeerd of the ghost of the man you killed, eh? Now, Lucifer, it didn’t take me many

year to find out that you was lyin'. You knowed you didn't kill him, and I knowed you knowed it. I knowed you went to keep the youngun out o' my way; and maybe it's well enough that *you've* kept out of my reach, too, Lucifer Grindle! Did it take me long to find out that you lied when you told me that you had killed the baby and flung it into the inlet? Not as long as you and Comfort Grindle was a thinkin' it did. I found it all out. I knowed where you got Kate from. Didn't I fix for Stam to see her? Didn't I know who he was git-tin' for a wife? Didn't I get her from you after all, Lucifer Grindle. She's been with *me* this many a year,—ha-ha-ha-ha! I guess I knowed what I was after!

"You hell-hound! that man had money buried,—plenty of it,—bushels of it: it's buried yet,—and all for your lie! You stole that youngun away, and it's my belief you got the man off too, for he warn't never seed here after that night; if you hadn't done that I should got the money. You lied when you said you was goin' to help me to git it; you know you meant to keep me from gittin' it. I found you out,—I found you out, you devil! and shouldn't I git *even* with you? Ha! What did I want with Kate so close to me? Ask her how many younguns she's had; ask her where they all is now. She can tell you how many she's had; but if you could see Jim Beam, maybe he'd tell you what went with *some* of 'em! But where's that man? where's his youngun? where's the bushels of gold he had buried somewheres in the sand? You lied to me, and I lost it after it was all in my reach! If you hadn't lied I should a got it! Shouldn't I have spite? Ha-ha-ha! Kate ain't been havin' sich a nice time, is she? Where's her babies? Go look in the bunk, one puny little warmint's in there. Warn't his time close once? Ask Jim Beam that, too! Ha! it was dark that night when they burnt Jim's house! We heerd them devils yellin' too soon; the mast, and rudder, and oars was in the boat, and all ready; three folks stepped out o' Jim's door: but *then* the yellin' was heerd, and them three stopped to listen. What a pretty frolic was spilt! Jim's gone now, and Peggy's gone; but there's more dark nights to come yet, maybe, before it comes my time to go! Ha, you devil! go look for Jim Beam and ask him if I lie!"

At first sight of the fierce old hag Lucifer darted like a

shot between Doctor Skyelake and Socrates, and during the whole time that she raved he stood speechless and trembling, peering over their shoulders at her.

"Stand out, Lucifer, stand out like a man," said Socrates; "it is only some lunatic who is in no manner responsible for anything that she may say; her words no doubt are only the whims of a disordered mind. Poor creature! she is much more to be pitied than feared; and as she seems to be acquainted with you, possibly, by going to her kindly and using gentle words, you may succeed in soothing the raging passion that seems to be devouring her very heart. Go forth, friend Lucifer, and be gentle, for you see very plainly that she is a lunatic, and that there is not a word of meaning in all her wild raving."

"Hanged if I'd go to her for a thousan' dollars!" said Lucifer, shuddering as he spoke; "her bite would be as pisin as the bite of a boy-conductor! I've knowed Nancy Weathers too long for that."

Silently Stam had stood and listened to every word that his demon mother had uttered; his horrified eyes were steadily fixed upon her during the whole time. He moved not,—scarcely breathed, until she had ended. Kate too had heard it all; but all the time her tearless eyes were fastened upon the face of her husband. That husband knew not when the arms of the anxious wife crept around his waist and were tightly clasped there; he knew not that her pale face was upturned to his; he heeded not its silent pleadings; he saw naught, naught but the fiend that stood before him, and who, now that she had ceased to rave, turned full toward him and seemed to be gloating upon his misery. But the son too was a fiend now,—fiend confronted fiend.

With all the power and nimbleness of a tiger that angry son bounded from the door toward his heartless mother. The hand of vengeance was uplifted and aimed before the leap! Oh, what power has the fiend's arm when it is nerved with anger! But that arm fell; its stroke smote only the air: for love had placed her bracelet on his waist and chained the giant to a feeble flower. That strengthful leap failed to reach the point aimed at, and the terrified object of vengeance sped away through the tangled growth with the fleetness of a doe.

“Hold, man!” said Doctor Skyelake, rushing toward the furious man,—“hold! it is your mother! Think! think! and act not the part of a brute,—it is your mother!”

“What is the matter with Kate?” asked Lucifer, who had recovered from his fright sufficiently to speak. “She looks as if she was dead.”

Kate had been dragged from the door by her husband; still her arms were clasped tightly around his waist, though now she hung there as limber and as motionless as one sleeping in death.

“She is dead!” said Socrates. “The fright has killed her!”

Until this was said Stam had known nothing of his wife’s clinging to him. “Dead?” he asked, as he looked down upon her. He acted as one waking out of a dreadful dream. “Dead? Kate dead!”

“She does indeed appear to be dead,” said Doctor Skyelake. “Place her gently down on the sand, Socrates, when I shall get her fingers unclasped; it may be that she is not yet dead. There, easy, Socrates!”

“Oh, Kate! Kate!” said Gilsey, as she came and kneeled beside the silent woman, clasping her hands and moaning sadly. “Oh, Kate! Kate! Kate! what’s me and baby goin’ to do now? what’ll we do if you dies?”

Stam also was kneeling now beside his wife and gazing wildly into her pale face. Anger had gone, and in its place was agonized fear.

“Kate!” he said, more in a surprised than sorrowful tone. “you ain’t gone and died, is you?—died! Open your eyes and look at me,—it’s Stam. Talk to me, Kate; tell me you ain’t dead!—dead? Oh, Kate, don’t, don’t, don’t take and die! What’ll I be if you goes and leaves me this a-way? Kate! Kate! You won’t talk to me,—Kate! Open your eyes and look at me; take a-hold o’ my hand in your’n; it’s Stam talking. Listen, Kate! I’m ready to do like you wants me to now; all’s ready to go off from North Banks *right now*. I guess we can make out to git somethin’ for us all to eat and wear, like you says; I know we can; other folks does, and we can. Nor I don’t want no more wrecked things neither, Kate,—that I don’t. Come, come, Kate! I’m all ready to start off now,—right now,—this very minit. The boat’s at the landin’, and there ain’t nothin’ for us to do but to git aboard and

take in the anchor and ship the rudder and sprit up the sail. Come, the wind's as fair as it can blow to go up the sound; but if you'd rather go the other way, I can beat her along at a good smart lick. Kate! oh, Kate! you ain't dead! You ain't gone and left me here all by myself! Open your eyes and talk to me, Kate! Don't you know I shan't never git to heaven,—never see the babies, if you don't stay with me? I don't know how to fix it like you does, and I know you wants me to go too. Look at me, Kate; I ain't mad with mammy, makes no difference what she says and does. Take a hold o' my hand and talk to me, Kate!"

During this impassioned pleading the rough North Banker seemed utterly to have lost sight of the fact that others were near him, his whole thought, nay, his whole soul was with the lifeless form before him. His words were neither loud nor exclamatory; they began with expressions of surprise and astonishment, then they softened down into sad, earnest pleadings to her, who was most dear to him of all created things, that she would come again into life; that she would for his sake, who loved her so dearly, continue to dwell with him, to be his companion still in the journey of life,—of life that would be darker than death without her.

Still she stirred not; the pale, quiet face looked, still, as if death were there indeed. A moment he waited in silence, as if yet she might answer his earnest pleadings, but she continued as quiet and deathlike as ever. Tenderly he raised her from the sand upon his breast; her head was now resting on his bosom. "Oh, Kate!" he said, in piteous tones, "don't,—don't die and leave me, Kate!"

"Quiet! quiet!" said Doctor Skyelake, who was leaning over and looking into her face; "she breathes. Bring water!"

Socrates darted off to the spring, and in a few moments returned, bringing a conch full of clear, cool water.

Kate had now opened her eyes; for a moment she stared at those around her, then she fixed them upon the agonized face of her husband.

"It's me, Kate," said Stam. "I'm got you here in my arms."

She recognized her husband and smiled.

"Oh, God, how glad I am!" he said, as tears came trickling out over his grizzly beard.

"Be quiet," said Doctor Skyelake, kindly; "she will be better in a few minutes."

"Drink a little of this water," said Socrates, presenting the conch to her lips; "it will refresh you."

She raised her head and drank, then placed it back, and rested there as a child rests upon the bosom of its mother.

"Did you hurt her, Stam?" she asked, in a feeble voice.

"No, Kate, I didn't touch her; you kept me from it."

"I'm glad of it!" she said. "Oh, I'm glad of it, Stam!"

"Kate, I told you that I wouldn't take on so no more. Now I tell you so again. I've broke my word many and many times with you, but you may trust me now, for never so long as I lives I shan't do the like of it again."

"It was certainly very wrong in you, Stam," said Socrates; "very, very wrong. You ought to remember that you are a man, and one of God's reasonable creatures. If it were not for the *reason* you would be a brute. Now, it is somewhat a matter of choice with you whether you will be a man or a brute. The devil makes it his business to insinuate himself into our friendship. He is all smiles and bows; but if you will take the least trouble to inquire into his real character, you will soon find out that he is a cheat and a hypocrite, and that he is extremely lavish with his *promises*, but never fulfils one of them. He is very jealous of man,—mainly on account of this great gift from Creator, *reason*,—and is forever in one way or another attempting to deprive him of that treasure. Now, he knows very well that if he makes his attacks boldly and openly to wrest this great treasure by force, he will be foiled in every attempt, so, as I have said, he takes the course of insinuating himself into our confidence and friendship. 'Suaviter,' not 'fortiter,' is his motto and rule. But trace history back to the first man, and you will find that this specious villain has never told one truth in the time. One might suppose from this that he would have long ago lost all power and influence; but so far from it, we fall into his traps more readily than our first parents did. We are continually bartering our reason with him, delivering *the property* to him, and receiving for it his *promises to pay*, which are not worth a straw.

"Now, Stam, you will have the best proof in the world of the truth of what I have been saying by taking your own case this morning. The devil slips up while you stand in the

door, makes a polite bow and smiles; you receive him kindly. Mind you, he don't say, frankly, What will you take for *your* reason, Stam? but, Stam, that old mother of yours has treated you badly: she needs killing; avenge yourself and be a man. I'll give you a bellyful of sweet revenge as soon as the job's done. Don't you see, Stam, how soon you agreed to the bargain, even before you inquired whether *sweet revenge* was good, nutritious food or a rank poison?

"What saved you? Nothing upon earth but this dear, loving wife of yours! Stam, the purity of the purest diamond that ever glittered is as one to a thousand billions when compared with the quality of that brave woman's soul. Her worth is inestimable, therefore a richer man lives not upon earth than her husband. Oh, the priceless value of a loving, virtuous wife! Think of the service yours has done you this day at almost the expense of her own life! Think, man, of a human soul stained with its mother's blood! Think! think! and love and honor your noble wife a thousand-fold more than you ever did before! Wife? aye, wife! true, virtuous, brave wife! Open the treasuries of Croesus and look upon the glittering brilliants there; bring all the gold and all the silver and all the gems of earth and add them to Croesus's wealth; then again look: how dazzling the glitter and glow! These pale before the virtues of a true wife as sparks before the rising sun. The richest gift, Stam, that God ever vouchsafed to mortal man is a loving, faithful wife. Respect, love, honor this of yours, for she has by this one instance proved herself to be a true wife."

"God bless you for these words, friend Socrates!" said Doctor Skyelake. "They are well said."

"Yes, Stam," continued Socrates, "your wife has saved you; strive not to fall again. Don't allow this affair of to-day ever to pass entirely from your mind. Don't allow yourself ever to regard your good fortune as a mere accidental escape from a great evil that was impending; but rather regard it as a link in the chain of God's providences. Do not suffer yourself to forget that you have this day been saved from as terrible a calamity as can befall a human being. Even a brute has some understanding of the relation of parent and child. I pledge you my word of honor I would abominate the *dog* that should wantonly and maliciously take the life of its mother. God saw fit that this poor woman whom you so

furiously assaulted should bring you into this world, and it is not for you to question His wisdom. Let the parent act ever so ungenerously, ever so cruelly, ever so wickedly toward the child; yet, the son who honors not the parent is lower in the scale of beings than even the most venomous serpent; for such a son is unnatural, and by his conduct he places himself with the brotherhood of fallen angels. He is a monster; an excrescence; a putrid sore upon the body: he is a demon before his time, and voluntarily steps beyond the pale and hope of heaven. He has seen fit to take it upon himself to act in opposition to the will of the Creator. I know that allowance must be made in particular cases under certain circumstances (for instance, so much ought not to be expected of one born in a heathen land as of one born and educated in a Christian land), but, as I have said, instinct itself is a teacher in these matters to some extent, and man in any condition is above the brute.

"I repeat, then, never suffer yourself to forget what a terrible calamity you have this day escaped. Great God! what a sign for a man to carry upon his forehead through life—*MATRICIDE*! Surely hell has no more awful brand of infamy!"

"Here's Nancy comin' back!" said Lucifer.

"She is a lunatic," said Socrates; "for no sane person could so soon recover from the effects of so great a fright."

Nancy came near, and stood and gazed wildly upon the group before her. "Stam!" she said, at last, "why don't you give me somethin' to eat! I ain't had a mou'ful since Peggy Strubl died! Don't you see me! Pete won't give me nothin'; nobody won't give me nothin'! Everybody says they wishes I was dead and in hell,—and that's all I gits to eat. Then, when I comed to you a spell ago, you wanted to kill me. Let me eat somethin' and then you may kill me if you likes, for I shan't run from you no more."

"I ain't never wanted to kill you, mammy," said Stam; "but what makes you carry on so? What made you and Jim——" He said no more. *Why* should he say more?

"If you don't give me somethin' to eat right away," said Nancy, sharply, "I shall die!"

"Yes, get something for her," said Socrates. "I was on the eve of starvation once, and I know what it is. It was you that fed me then, Stam."

Gilsey came running out of the house with a panful of fish and potatoes, and was about to hand it to the starving woman.

"Wait! wait!" said Socrates, snatching the pan from Gilsey's hand. "In her present condition she would swallow fish, bones, heads, tails, and fins, all together, and so be sure to get choked. Here!" he said to Nancy: "take this potato and eat as s'owly as you can, while I get the bones separated from the fish for you."

Nancy sat down on the sand near Socrates and ate the potato voraciously, while he made himself very busy picking the bones from the fish, which he handed over to her as rapidly as he could.

"There, you have eaten the whole panful," he said, as he gave the last piece to her; "and that is enough for this time. I will prepare another panful for you myself early to-morrow morning."

Nancy leered in surprise at her polite waiter; for it was the first time in her life that she had been treated with such marked and respectful attention.

"I should say, madam," said Socrates, "that the very best thing that you could do now would be to lie down here in the shade and sleep for some hours."

"Stam'll kill me if I does," she said, looking suspiciously toward her son, who was sitting at a few yards' distance.

"No, mammy; he won't hurt you," said Kate. "Will you, Stam?"

"I shan't *never* hurt you, mammy," said Stam; "never as long as I lives!"

"So you see, madam," said Socrates, "you have no cause of fear. If your son and his wife, whom you have so cruelly treated, can forgive you, surely no other living creature should bear malice in their hearts against you; but, if you still have fears, I will engage to sit here by you while you sleep, and protect you against all mischief that might threaten."

But before Socrates had delivered himself of the whole of this gallant offer of service, the poor weary old creature had eased herself down on her side and gone fast to sleep.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

HIDDEN THINGS BROUGHT TO LIGHT.

“COME, madam, come! it is full time that you should be awake and up,” said Socrates, as he gently rolled Nancy Weathers’s head from side to side in the soft sand on the next morning. “Too much sleep is as bad as not enough, and you are about to get more than you need of it. It is generally admitted that a fair division of time is, that of the twenty-four hours, eight should be devoted to sleep and the refreshing of the body; eight to labor and the performance of such duties as are chiefly of a selfish character: such as the providing of the means of sustenance for ourselves and those who are in a manner dependent upon us; and eight to the service and praise of the Beneficent Father who has given to us the life we have, and the friends and the pleasures that we enjoy,—and in these last and higher duties is included the love and service that we owe to our fellow-men. This is a very good general rule for the dividing of time, but it has its exceptions, as all other good rules have. Some persons require more and some less than eight hours’ sleep: depending upon the age and physical condition; some must sleep nine hours; others again need only seven,—six,—even five; my own opinion is that the adult in ordinary health who can get six and a half hours of good sound sleep out of the twenty-four, will not be apt to suffer. There are other exceptions to the general rule, which it is needless to speak of, for our subject now is sleep.

“I say, Nancy, that you are about to get more sleep than you *need*; for you have been lying here like one dead for about thirteen level hours; therefore you had better arise and shake off your slumbers, or you will so encroach upon the other two divisions of time, under the rule that I have given, that you will of necessity leave some of your highest duties unperformed. According to my promise, I have been sitting here at your side, watching over you and holding myself in readiness to protect you, ever since you closed your eyes yesterday after-

noon; and I am sure you cannot complain of having been in the least disturbed during the time. True, at one time, in the dead hour of night, while, for a few moments, I had my eyes fixed upon a bright star, a little toad hopped near; but I was fortunate enough to get him by one of his legs just as he was about to spring either over your head or into your mouth, which was at the time open, and I flirited him among the trees, and have not seen a toad since. Again, shortly after the dawn of day, I discovered that a little green snake had coiled itself snugly near your left heel and gone to sleep; fearful of disturbing your rest, I did not strike it, but only pitched a handful of sand upon its head, when it wriggled off into the woods as fast as ever it could go. If anything else of a harmful character came near you, I failed to see it. Come, madam, awake! awake!"

During the latter half of the time that Socrates had been speaking Nancy was lying there with her eyes wide open, staring at him. She had not stirred,—not even to the moving of a muscle, except that the thin curtains that had for so many hours been hanging over her deep eyes rolled up, and let in upon each of those eyes a perfect picture of the kind-hearted philosopher.

"Who are you?" she asked, gruffly.

"I am Socrates, madam,—a philosopher (if I may be allowed so to speak) of the school of the great Doctor Skyelake, the originator of the Pear Theory. You may ask me what the Pear Theory is. To anticipate, though, and save you the trouble of asking the question, I will inform you that during the still hours of the past night I have busied my mind in preparing an outline of a lecture which I purpose delivering to you. I can only attempt to bring the matter *succinctly* before you now; but you shall be made *fully and thoroughly* acquainted with it, as time and occasion hereafter may permit. But I must beg of you, in advance of the lecture, to excuse me if I shall ramble to some extent around the points of the text. The disadvantages under which I labor are many. You are aware that I am at a place where neither pen nor paper may be had. I shall, therefore, have to trust to memory entirely, which is not so absolutely certain a dependence as one might desire in such a case, and with such a subject to handle. I abominate the custom that is getting to be general, of placing

implicit reliance upon memory when abstruse subjects are to be treated upon. Ten to one there is *one* less genius in the world than the public speaker will allow himself to believe there is. To trust entirely to memory in the present case, though, is a *necessity*; and therefore it is that I make these excuses in the outset. I think that I have succeeded in getting the matter pretty well arranged in my mind, for I have been at it for the past five hours, and I did not call you to awake until I felt that I might trust myself. Will you be so kind as to sit up and attend to what I am about to say, madam?"

"You're a cussed fool!" said Nancy.

"Indeed, you are much mistaken!" said Socrates. "In all deference to your opinion, madam, you are in error; and I defy you or any other to prove the truth of such an assertion, either from a state of facts or upon logical reasons that have principles or common sense for their base."

"What are you settin' down here by me for?" asked Nancy, as she arose to a sitting posture a few feet in front of the philosopher, and glared angrily into his placid face.

"Ah," said Socrates, "I perceive that you are not yet fully awake! Have you forgotten the occurrences of yesterday? Do you not recollect the rencontre of yourself and your son Stam; the swooning of Kate; your running away? After that, your return and asking for food, and my picking of the bones from the fish for you?"

"I want somethin' to eat *now*!" she said, without attempting to reply to one of his questions. "I'm hungry!"

"I supposed you would be hungry upon awaking," said Socrates, "so I have had Kate and Gilsey cooking potatoes and fish for you; and here I have them in the pan, waiting to be eaten. I will pick out the bones for you as I did on yesterday."

"Can't I pick out the bones as good as you can?" she asked, scowling.

"Well, well, take the pan and manage it to suit yourself! As you are not so ravenous now as you were on yesterday, I suppose it will be safe for you to act for yourself. But you are still very hungry, and I would advise you to be very careful to get the bones out before eating."

Nancy received the pan into her hand; and after scrutinizing what it contained with a great deal of care for some time,

and turning over the fish and potatoes one by one with her long, bony forefinger, until she had examined them all to the very bottom of the pan, she looked up into Socrates' face with a searching gaze for some moments. "You devil!" she said, at last. "You've put pisen into this wittles!"

"I am a Christian gentleman," said Socrates, with some degree of indignation in his manner and tone, "not the poisoner of unfortunate females! I do assure you that what you have there in the pan is good, healthy food."

Nancy was not fully satisfied, even after this positive assurance from the philosopher. "Seems to me," she said, "that you're up to some deviltry. Ain't you a witch?"

"Witch!" said Socrates, starting slightly and staring full into the woman's face. "Witch! My good woman, allow me to assure you that there is no such thing as a witch in this wide world! You greatly surprise me when you give me to understand, as you do, that you believe in the existence of witches! But, if there were forty millions of witches, I positively and solemnly affirm that I am not one! Are you sure that you are fully awake, madam?"

"Well, I'll try it," said Nancy. "But look a-here, you devil fish-lookin' cuss, if you conjure me I'll kill you!"

Doctor Skyelake happening to overhear, from his seat near the chimney corner in the hut, the conversation that was going on without, had come quietly out, and was now standing near behind Socrates and Nancy, looking down upon them as they sat there near together on the sand.

"Conjure you!" said Socrates. "Will you persist, madam, in taking me for——"

"Eat what you have there without another word!" said Doctor Skyelake, in a deep, hoarse bass. "Eat, I say, Nancy Weathers!"

Nancy sprung to her feet at the sound of those unearthly tones that were pronounced so close behind her, and for some moments she stood there holding the pan in her hand, with her keen eyes fixed intently upon the doctor's stern face. "*And who are you?*" she asked, in a contemptuous manner.

Instead of answering a word, he advanced toward her, and took a fried mullet out of the pan and held it with its head toward her. "Tell her who I am!" he demanded, addressing himself to the mullet.

"You are the renowned and great philosopher, Doctor Skyelake, originator of the Pear Theory!" said the mullet.

"I thank you sincerely, friend Fried Mullet," said Socrates. "You have confirmed what I have already told her."

Nancy, in utter astonishment at hearing the fish speak, turned and was about to fly.

"Wait!" said Doctor Skyelake, in those same sepulchral tones as at first,—“wait, I say! or in less than five minutes I shall dump you headforemost into the sea, five hundred miles out from the beach!”

The terrified woman turned back, and stood trembling and gazing into the doctor's face.

"Take your seat again," he said, "and eat those fish and potatoes!"

"Take out this one that talked," she said, as she seated herself; "for I swear I won't eat nothing as long as it stays in the pan!—not if I gits pitched out a *thousand* mile!"

The talking mullet was taken from the pan, and Nancy took up the others, one by one, and looked into their mouths.

"Is the rest on 'em *fish*?" she asked.

"Don't you see they are?" said the doctor, breaking off their heads one after another and pitching them into the thicket.

"Looks so," she said, as she put a piece of one of them into her mouth and champed it awhile, then licked out her tongue half a dozen or more times, so as to get the taste well before swallowing. "Yes, it tastes like fish."

"Eat!" said the doctor, impatiently; "you have nothing before you but fried fish and potatoes."

Nancy was very hungry; the fish and potatoes were very good, and it was not long before the pan was empty.

"Now," said Socrates, "you have eaten all but one fish, and it is a very fine one; I mean this that the doctor has just placed in the pan; will you not eat *it*, madam?"

The look that the woman cast upon the ragged philosopher after he had got through speaking was that of ineffable contempt and disgust, but not a word in answer did she deign.

"Do you know now who I am?" asked Doctor Skyelake.

"I should guess you was a witch," she replied, in a tremulous voice.

"Ha, ha!" laughed Socrates. "No, Nancy; he's no *witch*;

he is a *dead philosopher* that has lately resurrected, after having been buried upwards of two hundred years! Ha, ha! and so you will persist that there are witches! You are many thousands of years behind the age, Nancy! He is *dead*."

"Dead!" she gasped, lowering her eyes from his to the sand.

"Ay, dead!" said Socrates; "and can tell you many things that you know, and many that you do not know, and many that you think you know that no one else knows."

"I must go now!" she said, half rising to her feet.

"Sit still!" said the mullet in the pan.

The woman, now unnerved, sank back in the spot from whence she had arisen and hid her face in her hands.

"Nancy Weathers!" said Doctor Skyelake, solemnly, "it is strange that you who fear not the great God that made you, nor your fellow-men, nor the devils in hell, should so fear to come into contact with the spirit of one who is dead! Have you ever taken the time to think, wicked woman, that one who lives out a whole lifetime such as yours so far has been, can only be a fit companion for devils after death?"

"Don't kill me!" she pleaded, piteously, as she pressed her hands still closer over her eyes, her old, bony frame shuddering as she did so.

"I shall not kill you; but why have you chosen to live so miserable a life?"

"I'll do better. Won't you let me go now?"

"Miserable, wretched creature! Have you no conscience? no feelings of pity and of mercy? no love nor sympathy for others? Why is it that you have chosen all your life to follow the dictates of devils? Why is it that you have preferred to bring misery and sorrow, rather than peace and comfort to your fellow-men? Do you remember the poor wretch who struggled to shore through the stormy sea with the little innocent in his arms years ago, and how you dogged the steps of that poor sufferer? How you delighted to meet him, and, for no cause, to curse him? How, for the sake of money, as well as to gratify your hellish propensities, you followed that weary, fainting, wretched man to the old hulk within which he had taken shelter for himself and his precious little charge, with the intent of taking his life and the life of the child,

though they had never harmed you? Wretched woman, think of these things! What were your feelings when you went creeping into the old wreck that night, carrying the drawn dagger in your hand? When, yourself acting the part of a fiend of hell, you saw the poor, sorrowing man stricken to the earth? When you saw that dear little one taken from him and borne away? When you sat there afterwards, and with foul lies deceived the bereaved sufferer? When the man whom you had chosen to be your partner in these dreadful crimes said to you that he had obeyed your orders and cut the throat of the dear innocent and thrown it in the inlet? Wretch! what were your feelings at these times? and what was your reward for the damning deeds?"

"It is as I said yesterday," said Socrates,—"*she delivered her goods and took for them the devil's promises to pay!*"

"Tell me," thundered Doctor Skylake, "what was your reward?"

Fright choked the trembling hag: she *could* not speak.

"You did receive something. Where are those packages? Where is the money? The price of innocent blood!—has time taken them all, and are you *poor* again? Ah, how the demons cheated you, and how they now mock you!"

"I guess the sad spoils of that night have taken wings and flown away long, long ago," said Socrates. "Twenty-nine years is a long time."

"I've got all that I got that night," growled Nancy.

"You have them!" said Doctor Skylake. "Where are they?"

"They're hid," she said. "I'll go and git 'em if you'll let me."

"How far away from here are they?"

"Not far; I'll bring 'em soon!"

"Bring them!" he said. "Bring them soon! Go!"

Fleet as a deer she sped down the path, again and again turning back her eyes while she continued in sight.

"I rather think," said Socrates, as Nancy passed from sight around the bend of the path, "that we shall never see her again. She will either run on twenty miles in that way, or else she will wring her head off turning it to look back; it is the last of her, I think, without doubt."

"I am much mistaken if she does not intend to return,"

said Doctor Skylake. "We shall be sure to see her if she was telling the truth about having those things."

"How wonderful it is," said Socrates, "that one should ever be disposed to plan and coolly perpetrate such crimes for the sake of a few dollars!"

"Truly wonderful!" said Doctor Skylake, thoughtfully. "It is bartering all the precious gifts of God for gold, which, when it is acquired, brings not happiness often, but often brings misery!"

"See," said Socrates, "she is returning already. Poor creature, how she pants under her burden!"

"Put them down there," said Doctor Skylake, "then sit down yourself. Are these all?"

"Yes," she answered, hesitatingly.

"Liar!" he said. "Where is the trunk?"

"All's here but that!" she screamed. "I'll bring it!" And again she sped away as at first.

"If I possessed the remarkable faculty that I see you have, Doctor Skylake," said Socrates, "I think I would make use of it for the benefit and promotion of science."

"What is the remarkable faculty that you refer to?" asked the doctor.

"That of looking through the opaque windows of the human heart," said Socrates.

"And what use would you put such a remarkable faculty to?"

"I should never rest," said Socrates, "until every reasonable creature in the land should be brought to admit the truth of the Pear Theory; first I should exhaust all the powers of argument and suasion, and then——"

"And then *what*, friend Socrates?"

"And then I should *compel* them to believe it,—frighten them into the belief. My object being a worthy one, I believe the end would justify the means."

"Depend upon it, friend Socrates, those are not the words of true philosophy. Let the means be honorable, and remember that God disposeth."

"You are very wise," said Socrates, "and I admit that my zeal is disposed to lead my judgment."

"Suppose, friend Socrates," said Doctor Skylake, "that after you had *driven* all the world into your belief, you should

discover that you had all along been mistaken, and that the Pear Theory is a mere myth——”

“The Pear Theory a mere——”

“Here is Nancy again,” said the doctor. “Are you sure you have *all* now?” he asked, addressing her.

“These is *all*,” she said, “*and you knows it!*”

“Where is the money?”

“In this bag.”

“And where is the little box?”

“There it is on that trunk.”

“There is more money in that bag than you got at that time.”

“I know it; but I don’t want *none* of it. Take it all!”

“No. Take it and keep it; have you not well earned it?”

“I don’t want it.”

“Take it! Is it not yours?”

“I tell you I don’t want it!”

“Take it, wretch! and henceforth be not afraid to claim it as your own, for now I tell you that it is yours! Do not want what you have been at such pains and trouble to earn? It is the price of human blood! Nay, more, woman, it is the value that you place upon your own soul? Do not want it? Are you insane? Take it, take it, woman!”

“I don’t want it! I don’t want none of it!” she screamed.

“Ha! have you at last discovered the value of what has cost you so much? It is late for the knowledge to come; for your hairs are gray, and the sun cannot rise and set many more times for you. It is late, indeed! but God grant that, late as it is, the discovery may benefit you!”

“Is you goin’ to kill me now?” she asked.

“Kill you? No, poor woman, death will come for you soon enough! So far from being disposed to take your life, I pray that God will spare it until you have learned to realize fully how wretched its past has been. See, before you are the fruits of your labors and trials from infancy! and you have discovered now that they are worthless! Go where you will now, but think of how much better you could have done in the past, and pray that God will forgive you, and lead you in the future.”

“What is this?” asked Kate, anxiously, as she came from the house up to where Doctor Skyelake and Socrates were

standing. "Where did all these come from? Is there a wreck on the beach?"

"No, Kate," said Socrates; "before you are the ill-gotten hoardings and accumulations of a long lifetime; the price of human blood,—the price of a precious soul is there! The wages of dark deeds are contained in that little bag, and she that has well earned them has discovered, now that the light of life is flickering and low, that they are worthless! These, the rewards of dark deeds, were hid away from the light as soon as received, but now they again come forth to the light of day to mock their deluded possessor. Great God! how depraved and grovelling is the human heart!"

"Kate," said Doctor Skyelake, in a gentle tone, "do you remember the sweet face of Dear Mamma?"

"Oh, I'll never forget her pretty face," said Kate. "It has been a long time, but I know it as well now as when she was here."

"Open that little box: a picture is there; tell me if it is like her."

Kate opened the box and took from it a miniature taken on ivory. No sooner had her eyes rested on the gentle face than she exclaimed, joyfully, "It is her! it is *Dear Mamma!* she that told me about heaven and the angels! Oh, it is she that loved Kate!"

Stam came and looked down over the shoulder of his wife at the picture. "It is a pretty one, sure enough," he said. "Is it her, Kate?"

"Yes, yes, Stam; it is that pretty wrecked one! Oh, Stam, she loved Kate!"

"She loved you, indeed, Kate," said Doctor Skyelake. "She brought you into life; you were her baby, and she loved you as you love yours. Young as you were when she left you to go and be with the angels, yet, it is not strange that her beautiful image has remained upon the heart of her child. Ah, Kate, I saw the parting of mother and child; it was a sorrowful sight! She died in the dark waters when the tempest was raging. I was there; she placed you in my arms, then she died; but God spared you and me. We were all that reached the shore alive. Your father was there too; *Papa* and *Dear Mamma* sank down in each other's embrace; I never saw them more. They embraced you; they kissed you the

sad farewell; then you were left with me. A billow came crashing and sweeping the ship's decks: they were torn away by the angry floods, and you were left an orphan in the cold, merciless world, old enough to lisp the name of Dear Mamma, but too young to know how great, how beyond price the treasure you lost in that dark sea. Yes, Kate, Dear Mamma is an angel now, smiling upon her child from heaven."

"Pretty mamma!" said Kate, kissing the sweet face of the picture. "Oh, pretty angel, *Dear Mamma!*"

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A LECTURE ON DEVILS.

EIGHT persons are grouped under the stunted oaks in front of Stam Weathers's hut. The face of Kate is lighted with joyous surprise as she looks upon the miniature of Dear Mamma that she has just taken from the little box. Stam is looking down over his wife's shoulder at the picture; an expression of pleased wonder is on his face. Doctor Skyelake stands at a little distance, with arms folded on his breast; he is silently watching the man and his wife, and smiling as he does so. Gilsey, with the babe in her arms, stands between Kate and Doctor Skyelake. A frown of deepest awe is on her face as she gazes up into that of the strange old man. Lucifer's place is a little in the rear of all these; but he is stretching out his neck to its utmost extent and inclining forward his whole body, that he may bring himself into a position the better to see their faces; his mouth is half open, and his protruding eyes are staring at Kate and at Stam and at Doctor Skyelake; then back at Stam and at Kate; and so continually from one to another, and then back. Socrates and Nancy sit upon the sand, facing each other, a few yards in front of the rest of the group. Her legs are stretched out before her, her sharp heels in the sand, and her bony feet sticking straight up; her head is slightly bowed, and her evil eyes are rolled up beneath the shaggy brows to the face of that awful man *that knows everything*. She sees nothing but

that face; she hears naught but the dreadful voice when he speaks. Socrates' benevolent face is turned earnestly toward hers; his right forefinger is upraised and ready to descend into the left palm. He hopes, by his mild word and earnest gesture to attract her attention toward himself, for a fair opportunity has arrived for the delivery of the lecture on the Pear Theory.

That group (excepting Socrates) was for a time motionless: its figures were as still as statues. Socrates, though not noisy, was restless. Socrates Junior possessed as rich a store of patience as Socrates Senior ever did; they both had their severe trials. Socrates Senior had Xantippe to deal with; Socrates Junior, Nancy. The Senior Socrates had his way of dealing with Xantippe; the Junior, *his* way of dealing with Nancy.

Three times in succession, at reasonable intervals, too, that right forefinger descended into the left palm; the gesture each time accompanied with the words, "And now, my dear madam, if you will allow me to have your attention." But Nancy Weathers paid no more attention to either gesture or word than if the highest peak of the Altai Mountains had been between herself and Socrates Junior. The benevolent expression faded away and away from Socrates' face, until at last every trace of it had disappeared. The lecture that he had taken such a world of pains to prepare must be indefinitely postponed. But he was fully determined now that the stolid and crime-hardened creature should be brought back to right reason,—if, indeed, such a thing were within the range of possibilities,—and he would try the effect of harsher measures with her. So, without further ado, he reached forward, and grasping the inattentive and sullen hag by both her shoulders, he shook her back and forth with great violence, saying, in a loud and commanding tone, as he did so, "Listen!"

So astounded was Nancy at this sudden and very rude assault that, without in the least bending her stretched-out legs, or raising her heels clear of the sand, she sprang a foot high, reaching out her arms as she did so, and flapping them rapidly up and down as if they had been wings; then she dumped heavily back into the very spot from whence she had arisen. Nor was Nancy the only startled one of that group. Gilsey, supposing that it had thundered, screamed so loudly

that the baby awoke and screamed too; and Lucifer, whose eyes happened to turn to Nancy the instant she sprang from the sand, exclaimed, in a loud voice, "Look at her! I swear she's off, sure 'nough!" He had no doubt but that she had started out five hundred miles from the beach, to be dumped into the sea.

"Be composed, Nancy," said Socrates, "and listen to me. With the assurances that you have had from the truly great and wonderful personage who has unlocked the very deepest and darkest chambers of your heart, and brought out to light the terrible secrets that for long years have been prisoned there, that he will not harm you, or inflict present punishment upon you, however richly you may deserve it,—I say, with these assurances, you have great cause to rejoice, and to look about you hopefully, and with purpose to amend your ways. You have encouragement to set about you, on the right hand and on the left, driving away the devilish passions that have all along held you as their prisoner and slave. It is full time, Nancy, that you were looking to your own heart, with the view of making the honest attempt to cleanse and purify it, at least to some extent; for, depend upon it, its condition is no better than were the Augean stables when Hercules took them in hand. Devil spores spring like hydra-heads from every point about it, and these should be rubbed off and crushed.

"The human heart, it is true, is but a little thing,—not much bigger than a sugar-pear,—and yet a whole legion of full-grown devils can get into it and have abundance of room. I doubt not you will be surprised if you will look into your heart, Nancy; it may be (and yet, understand me, I make no assertion that such is the case) that if the devils that have their domicile there were mustered out 'single file,' they would reach around this globe! Think of that! And yet, one brave arm of flesh, armed with proper weapons, may overcome even so formidable an array; for, grim as devils may appear, they are, after all, arrant cowards. Now, I do not mean to say that the routing and destruction of such an army would be an easy task, but only that such a thing is within the range of possibilities.

"Where, you may ask, do so many devils come from? I have said that the human heart is prolific; every point in it

half the size of a needle-point is capable of sending forth twenty spores, and each spore may produce a score of devils. Then these devils breed among themselves, like pismires, and grow as rapidly to maturity. A crop of forty thousand may come into existence in the morning, and before night they are all full-grown and ready for active duty. Peep into your own heart and watch the operations there for one day!

“What is to be done? you may ask. How is one’s heart ever to be freed of such pests? Why, make it continually hot for them by cutting and slaying among them? Let them know that you are in earnest, and you will see that they are a set of the veriest cowards and braggarts,—you will drive them before you like sparrows before a goshawk. Have no truce or parley with them, for they are a rabble of outlaws that know not what honor is.

“Now, you have been going down-hill these seventy years, until you have almost reached the bottom. What do you expect to find *there* worth having? Take my word for it, you had better turn square around and go climbing back as fast as you can go. Thrust the dark legions away from you, and try the companionship of peace, love, mercy, and the like. I venture to say you will never quit their company after you become well acquainted with them. But don’t deceive yourself by supposing that those evil beings who have been your lifetime companions will fly away and leave you at your simple command. They will stick the closer to you when you turn and start from them; they will be continually tugging at you and drawing you back; they will keep close enough to you to keep you plastered from head to foot with excuses for your past conduct. But have your eyes open and your weapons ready, and keep them from *pasting their bills* if you can. Remember that they are the aggressors, and that you have the right to protect yourself even if you should have to resort to rough measures; therefore let there be no *molitur manus imposuit* about your action; but go at them *vi et armis*; cut and slay from right to left and with vim.

“Bear with me, Nancy; I have no desire to trifle with misfortune or mock at wretchedness, nor am I one to wish to roll heavy weights on one who has already fallen beneath a toppling mountain. My desire is to press upon you by plain speech the fact that your whole life has been one of heinous crime,

in the hope that you may spend the few days that remain for you as a reasonable creature should do ; that is, by struggling upward to light, instead of down deeper into misery and darkness. So much for devils. But again :

“Imagine, Nancy, that you stand arraigned before a court of justice to be tried for your crimes. What a bill of indictment would that be that should contain all the crimes and offences of your life ! What a multitude of counts ! What a long list of distinct crimes ! and what a number of terrible penalties would follow the verdict that justice would render ! Take this one affair of the man and child that were wrecked twenty-nine years ago ; how do you stand ? Let us see : (1st) you instigated the murder of a man ; (2d) you instigated the murder of a child ; (3d) (for I take it that the intent, unrepented of, is the deed) you murdered a man ; (4th) by the same reasoning you murdered a child ; (5th) you are the abductor of a child ; (6th) nay, worse, you enticed another to steal a child ; (7th) you entered a dwelling by force in the night-time, with intent to commit a felony,—you are therefore a burglar ; (8th) you advanced toward sleeping parties with a drawn knife in your hand, with intent, it may reasonably be said, to take human life,—you are therefore an assassin ; (9th) you compelled another, by force, to deliver to you his money and goods,—you are therefore a robber ; (10th) you withheld from your accomplice in crime his share of ill-gotten goods,—you are therefore unfaithful and a thief ; (11th) you made incorrect statements to the man you robbed as well as to your accomplice,—you are therefore a malicious liar. But there is no need to extend the list, for enough has been enumerated to hang six men and imprison for life five others ; and all the work of one hour’s time ! What plea could be made for you with effect upon the trial ? I question much, Nancy, that even that of *insanity* would avail you !”

Not one-half of this lengthy lecture was listened to by Nancy, or by any other present ; but, for all that, Socrates, who was himself deeply interested, went on unrolling and unwinding until he got to the very end.

“Have you but this child ?” asked Doctor Skyelake of Kate.

“He’s all,” she said, with a sigh ; “the rest is all gone. Two died when they was little, and they’re buried under the

trees on t'other side of the hill yonder. Then there was two more; and they're gone too!"

"Gone where?" asked the old man.

Kate looked into her husband's face, but made no answer.

"Tell him," said Stam; "tell him all about it; don't be afeerd, for I shan't never forgit no more."

"They was stole away," said Kate; "stole, and carried away off and drowned!"

Poor Kate! hard though she struggled, she could not keep back the sobs; she could not prevent the mother's tears from flowing. But she felt the hand that held hers to tremble, and instantly the sobs were hushed, the tears were brushed away. "Oh, Stam!" she gasped, as her frightened face turned toward her husband's, "you won't forgit?"

"Tell it all, Kate; I shan't never break my promise no more!"

"Your children stolen away and drowned?" asked Doctor Skyelake. "Drowned, Kate? Who drowned them?"

No answer was returned, for now Kate held her face in her hands and was weeping bitterly.

Nancy sat trembling and convulsed.

"Miserable woman!" said Doctor Skyelake, addressing the hag, "can *you* not answer the question?"

"Yes!" she answered.

"Tell me, then, who it was. Speak but the truth!"

"It was Jim and Peggy—and—me!"

Not another word was spoken for some time: all stood aghast and horrified staring at the guilty old creature whose head was now bowed low, and whose quivering eyes leered down upon the sand. At last she continued: "Stam beat Peggy for takin' up with a nigger, and that's the way Jim and her got *their* spite; Lucifer lied to me and kept me from gittin' the money that was buried, and that's the way I got mine; then Jim and Peggy give me ten of the pieces that's in that bag to help about gittin' 'em off. That's the way of it!"

"Great God!" exclaimed Doctor Skyelake, "to what depths may humanity descend!"

"Don't kill me! don't kill me!" screamed the hag in a piteous tone. "I'll tell it all—all, like it was! It's been many a year, but I ain't forgot! We took the old skiff in

tow: it was dark and stormy. We crossed the sound: the wind was howlin', howlin', howlin' up the dark river! Jim put the younguns in the skiff and turned her adrift. We beat back here; we anchored the boat at the landin'. When day come ag'in we was all here,—that's the last of it! We was here,—*they* ain't never been here since!"

"Merciful heaven!" exclaimed Doctor Skyelake. "Go, Lucifer, go and make ready the boat; instantly! instantly! and let us be off!"

Lucifer waited not to inquire into the cause of this unexpected order, but went off in a brisk jog, not even turning his head once to look back, and he was followed closely by Doctor Skyelake.

Stam and Kate were astonished; they only stood and followed with their eyes the retreating forms until they were hid beyond the angle in the path. Socrates was the only one who did not seem surprised. He stood holding his hands behind his back and smiling placidly a time, then he said:

"I know you do not understand the meaning of this caper, but *I* understand it very well, and I will stay long enough to explain: Doctor Skyelake is subject to fits of insanity, and all that there is about this affair is, that one of these fits is now upon him; in less than an hour he will be all right again, and as sane as the sanest man that lives. For all that he is afflicted with these occasional fits, he is a most profound philosopher. Nor is his an exceptional case of the kind: it is a common infirmity (if infirmity it be) with philosophers and scientists. I have known of cases of what *you* would call *madness* to continue a week, or even two weeks or more, and, strange to say, during those very periods of seeming insanity the greatest discoveries and the grandest and most sublime compositions would be brought forth by the *afflicted*. But I must follow, or I shall keep them waiting for me." Saying this Socrates turned and moved rapidly off toward the landing; but to his great surprise he discovered when he reached the sound-side that the boat containing Lucifer and Doctor Skyelake was a full half-mile out from shore, heading under full sail and before a stiff breeze toward Roanoke Island. For some time he did nothing but stand there and look out at the boat that was speeding continually farther and farther away from him, for he thought that they had forgotten him, and that when

they should come to remember that he had been left behind, they would put the boat about and beat back for him. But not a single time were their faces turned toward him, though he stood there until they had reached the island-shore and furled the sails, and stepped to the land and passed from view.

Finding that he could do nothing better, Socrates then turned about and retraced his steps to Stam's house, and there he found all exactly as he had left it, except that Stam and his wife and Gilsey and the baby had gone into the house. The trunk and little box were there, and even the bag of money was on the trunk-lid still. Nancy was still sitting at the same place and in the same position, her legs stretched out before her, her heels in the sand, and her feet sticking straight up; but now that the dreadful man was not there to be leered at, she kept her sullen eyes fixed steadily upon her great toes. As Socrates approached near to her, he made a graceful bow and remarked, "You look disconsolate, madam; take my advice and arise and walk around, for no doubt the exercise will benefit you; but, besides that, the many objects that would present themselves for your observation would have the effect of drawing your thoughts off from the painful subjects that have been engaging them recently. Long continued and severe thought upon any one subject may, after a time, be followed by insanity, and certainly nothing is more to be dreaded than that. Let me assist you to arise, for I think you must be very cramped and stiff."

"Go away from here!" said Nancy, fiercely. "I'm goin' to stay right here till he comes back. Think I'm goin' to have him pitchin' of me out into the sea?"

"Your determination is an unwise and rash one," said Socrates, "for it may be a week, or a month, or possibly a whole year before the philosopher returns. I see, madam, that you still refuse to take this money into your possession, though you were told that you could safely do so. Let's see how much there is of it." Saying this, he took the bag from the trunk-lid, sat down, and crossed his legs under him as a tailor does when he sits on his board, and emptied the coin from the bag into his lap; then, holding the mouth of the bag open with his left hand, he dropped it back piece by piece, counting aloud as he did so.

"All Spanish doubloons," he said, "and twenty-five of them. Let us say that the sum is equivalent to eighty pounds sterling,—four hundred American dollars. Now fifteen of these pieces are from the wrecked man, and ten are from Jim and Peggy. There were four persons,—the wrecked man and child, and the two children of Kate. Divide this sum into four equal parts, and we will have twenty pounds,—one hundred dollars for each part. It strikes me, Nancy, that you have made an exceedingly poor thing out of the transaction,—the devil has the bargain all on his side. He is a shrewd old fox; and if it were not for such business as this, and such bargains as this, he would have to suspend business, and then he would be sure to lose caste and credit. Of course he would; for think how insignificant a wretch a bankrupt devil would be! His best friend would be sure to give him the cold shoulder. Ha! ha! a bankrupt devil."

"Get up, mammy," said Stam, in a kind but sad tone, "and go into the house; Kate and Gilsey has cooked up some wittles for you."

"Yes, go in the house and eat by all means," said Socrates, "for I think you are hungry; and if you will listen to my advice you will take charge of this money, and put it to some good use; by so doing you will inflict a severe blow on the devil's head."

"I shan't take it!" said Nancy, sullenly, as she pushed the proffered bag from her.

"Then I shall hold it in trust for you," said Socrates, as he dropped the bag into his pocket. "I hope you will yet take my advice though and put it to some good use. It is the pitiful reward from a hard master for seventy years of slavish toil; and yet it may be wisely invested for good. It is the scanty fruit of a blighted harvest, Nancy; and yet it is seed that, if sowed on good ground and skilfully cultivated, may produce ten-thousand-fold at the next harvesting."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

A LECTURE ON THE PEAR THEORY.

"TAKE one of these bundles of fagots, Lucifer, and I will take the other; stand there, six feet from me, with your face toward Croatan, and be ready to light yours as I light mine; then hold yours up higher than your head, exactly as I shall hold mine. Sit down there on that tuft of dry rushes, Comfort, and look about you as much as you like. Your eyes will have plenty to do by and by, for I think it will not be long before I shall hear from my honored friends across the way; and if they are not here with us in less time than two hours, I shall be greatly mistaken."

So spake Doctor Skyelake, as he and Comfort and Lucifer stood at the *North End* on the night of the day that Socrates had been left behind on North Banks.

"What!" said Lucifer. "Is they comin' over to-night?"

"I wish I had a-knowed about it sooner in the day," said Comfort. "I didn't have no idee that they was goin' to come to-night, or I should been cookin' up some wittles. Shouldn't wonder if they was a-hungry when they gits here; and it'll take a right smart mess for nine, too. Lors a me! I used to think that ghosts didn't eat folk's wittles, but I b'lieve they loves it 'bout as good as I does,—ain't no difference so far as I've seen. I wonder you hadn't told me they was comin' to-night. The younguns of 'em will sure to want somethin' the minit they gits here; that they will! But, then, I guess it won't take long to fix up a little somethin'."

"You needn't bother about that," said Lucifer, "for there's plenty of fish, and plenty of 'taters, and plenty of meal, and plenty of honey, and plenty of milk. And all's about it is, there'll have to be some cookin' done, and they'll have to wait a spell if they is hongry. I guess they'll git along some fashion."

"Now, Lucifer," said the doctor, "up with your light! There, that's right; hold it just so. Bend your eyes on

Croatan, and if my friends are there, it will not be many minutes before we shall know it. How the torches blaze! This is excellent lightwood that you have got for us."

"You said you wanted *good*,—and good it is," said Lucifer.

"You, too, may keep a lookout, if you like, Comfort," said the doctor.

"Needn't tell me that," she said, "for I'm already lookin' out with all my eyes—Oh, lorsy!"

Comfort made this exclamation as two bright lights burst out from the opposite shore; and, as she made it, she sprang to her feet with the nimbleness of a girl of sixteen and bounded forward, and stood crouching between the two blazing torches.

"Comfort!" said Lucifer, reproachfully, "hanged if you hadn't better mind how you carries on *now*! This is pertickler bizness, and you'd ought not to be trottin' around that way. It's 'nough to make 'em think that you was skeerd if they should happen to see you. You mustn't forgit that we ain't used to this sort of folks; and, for all you knows, if they should see you cuttin' up such capers, they'd be after puttin' a spell on you, *and on me, too*! Don't go cavortin' around that way no more, then. The best way for you to do is like you sees me doin'. Make b'lieve you've been used to sich as they is ever since you was a little gal. Hanged if you won't git us both into a hobble yet if you don't watch!"

"See here, Lucifer, wave your light back and forth as you see me wave mine!" said Doctor Skyelake. "There, that is well done! Now extinguish your light."

"Lord bless us!" said Comfort. "Look yonder; they're wavin', too! What in the name of peace is you doin', Lucifer?—puttin' your light out? Look a-here, our folks, you ain't a-goin' to put that other one out too, is you?"

"Comfort, Comfort!" said Doctor Skyelake, "be brave, woman! Now come here, Lucifer, and help me to lash my torch to the top of this stake. We must let it burn so that our friends may know how to steer; and I know no good reason why this stake should not be made to do the holding-up, instead of you or I having to stand with our arms stretched up for an hour or more."

"Jes' so," said Lucifer. "Fact is, I feels weak a'ready, somehow."

"It's *skeer* that makes you feel so," said Comfort; "and I don't wonder neither, for it's just as much as I can do to keep on my legs."

The stake, with the torch blazing at the top of it, was stuck in the ground; and the whole party sat down together, and awaited the coming of Doctor Skyelake's friends.

The doctor was in an unusually happy mood. Every now and then he would laugh heartily at the queer actions and quaint expressions of Lucifer and his wife; and both his manner and appearance were anything but terrible now. Heretofore it had been the case that whenever anything took place or was said that did not please him, he would speak out in such a low, sepulchral bass as to frighten the man and his wife almost into fits; and at such times they would scarcely know whether they were standing on their heads or their feet, until he should take on a more natural expression, and talk in a voice that did not seem to be coming up from the ground. But there had been nothing of this for full six hours past; on the other hand, all was smiles and pleasant words with him. A stranger could hardly have been made to believe that one so amiable as Doctor Skyelake then was had ever learned to know what anger is.

If it had not been that a bevy of ghosts was constantly expected to heave in sight through the gloom that hung over the waters, both Lucifer and Comfort would have been as happy, sitting there on the dry rushes, as happy could be; but, as it was, they were both exceedingly nervous. They were continually casting their eyes out over the sound,—nay, sometimes stooping forward their bodies and peering for minutes at a time in silence, then turning one ear and the other in the direction of Croatan, and listening attentively. Now and then they would jump almost out of their skins at the flipping of a jumping-mullet; and, in fact, Lucifer was full as nervous as his wife. Yet, for all this, they were in a manner happy; and at times they would even break forth in feeble spasms of laughter at hearing some unusually funny expression made by Doctor Skyelake.

"Tell me, Lucifer Grindle and Comfort Grindle," said the doctor, "what manner of people have you imagined those to be who are soon to land at this very spot?"

"I should say," Lucifer answered, "that they looks as if

they were a thousan' year old. I should guess they've all got big bald heads, and long white beards (even to the women and younguns), and big bellies, and short stout legs, and little curlycued horns, and ears that flabs down, and long noses that hooks downwards, and p'inted chins that hooks upwards and almost fetches the noses, and——"

"No; let me tell, let *me* tell!" said Comfort, impatiently.

"Well," said the doctor, "Lucifer will wait. Go on, Comfort."

"And feet two foot long," continued Lucifer, "with the legs sot plumb in the middle, leavin' the heel eend to shoot back'ards as fur as the toe eend does for'ards, and——"

"Wait, Lucifer," said Doctor Skyelake; "give way for a few minutes to your wife."

"I should say," said Comfort, "that it is sorter this way: they are a people that has fins and scales and shells, and that has six or more legs, and that has long p'inted eyes, and noses that looks like tits, and heads that 'draws in and out o' ther' shells like tarapins' heads does, and that has web-claws, and shell-bellies, and——"

"Hanged to death if they ain't comin'!" said Lucifer, springing wildly to his feet as he spoke. "Here they comes sure 'nough!"

"Oh, lorsy!" Comfort exclaimed, as she ran and crouched behind her husband. "Oh, lorsy!"

"There stands dear Basil!" said a sweet voice from the boat, that had now nearly reached the shore.

"Oh, lorsy!" groaned Comfort, without venturing to raise her head or take her hands from her face. "What's it they're talkin' about, Lucifer? Oh, lorsy!"

"Don't take—take—take on—on so——" said Lucifer, whose knees were banging fiercely together as he spoke. "Make b'lieve—b'lieve Comfort—you ain't—ain't skeered a bit—ain't skeered a bit—bit, Comfort!"

"Look up, Lucifer and Comfort," said Doctor Skyelake; "for I do assure you that you have no cause for fear, as you yourselves may see: these are my friends and yours."

No sooner had the boat's bow touched the sand than Fawn and Timon bounded out and into the open arms of old Basil. "God bless my precious children!" he said. The only reply that came to these words of blessing was the closer

embrace of tender loving arms, and the sobs and tears of pure affection.

Paul stood on the head of the boat, a silent witness of the joyous meeting. "Fawn," he said, as old Basil stood erect again and held his children's hands, "I hope you and Timon will be near when we find papa; if you are, I think you will find that it will be a meeting something like this,—mamma and Lucie and Murat will cry; the little baby will laugh and reach out her arms; I shall hug and kiss papa a great deal, to be sure, but I shall not cry a single drop. Not that I won't be as glad as anybody to see him, but Jeannot and François both say that I am getting to be a very big boy; and it is so, for look at me! Big boys and men laugh instead of crying when they are happy; you will hear me laugh as loud as ever I can scream."

"If I mistake not," said François, "I see a great round tear rolling out from each of Master Paul's two eyes even now."

Paul was taken somewhat aback by this discovery of François's. "Yes, François," he said, as he wiped the tears away; "but I cried *these* for Fawn and Timon, you know,—not for myself."

Lucifer and Comfort were greatly surprised, upon raising their heads and looking around, at seeing so many happy faces.

"Jes' but look!" said Comfort in a low tone to her husband; "I *told* you they was purty!"

"I knowed it before you told me," said Lucifer.

"I suppose you have no fears *now* of being devoured by my friends?" said Doctor Skyelake to Lucifer and Comfort.

"Lord bless ther purty souls!" said Comfort; "there's more danger I should say of *their* gittin' eat up!"

"If I didn't know better," said Lucifer, "I should say that this was Jim Beam's boat."

"And very probably it *is* his," said François. "But what is it about Jim Beam's boat?"

"Why, she was stole and carried off by a gang of drunken devils, so they tell me."

"This may be the very same boat," said François; "we found her near the shore, and are ready at any time to deliver her to the proper owner."

"Warn't no one in her when you found her?" asked Lucifer.

"Not a soul."

"It's mighty good in you," said Comfort, "to pick up folks's boats that's been stole, and fetch 'em to them that's lost 'em."

While this conversation was going on between Lucifer and his wife and François, old Basil was at a little distance away, giving an account to Marie and Jeannot of what he had been doing, and how matters stood at present. "All before us is now bright and hopeful," he said, in a low tone; "I cannot now explain, but this much I will say: we are now in a favorable condition to strike out forthwith in the search for the lost one. You, madam, and all the children and Jeannot, will follow these old people to their home, and remain there until you hear from me again; François and I will cross over to the coast without delay. I will say one thing more to you before we part: I have impressed the people hereabout with the belief that I am possessed of supernatural powers; not only so, but that myself and you all are spirits lately resurrected. Be not astonished, therefore, at anything you may hear, and by all means keep up the deception, for more depends upon that than you can now imagine. I am known by the name of Doctor Skyelake. I have told them of your coming; and they are prepared to know François as Arthur Barlow, Jeannot as Philip Amidas, and you, madam, as Barlow's wife. Barlow and Amidas were captains that brought their ships from England to this island A.D. 1585. Instruct the children as well as you can, and be cautious. François and I will return here soon; in the mean time, fear nothing, for you will be not only safe, but comparatively comfortable and well cared for."

"We understand," said Jeannot.

"Lucifer and Comfort!" said old Basil, "the renowned Arthur Barlow and myself have important matters in hand that must be attended to without delay. This lady and her children and the great Philip Amidas will follow you to your house and remain there until we return." The boat was then pushed from shore, and the old man, with François, sailed away on the dark waters toward the sea-coast, the rest of the company went following Lucifer and Comfort along the path toward their home.

"We are on our way," said the old man to François, "to the house of Stam Weathers, a dweller on the coast. It is upon Stam and Lucifer (the old man whom we have just left) that we shall depend chiefly for aid in the work that is before us to be done. Stam you will find to be rough, but for all that a generous, noble-hearted man; and as you will see, his wife is not a whit behind him in good qualities. If the man for whom you are searching be still alive, I doubt not but that we shall find him; for now, François, there is great hope."

"God grant that your hope be well grounded," said François, "and that the good man be speedily restored to his affectionate family! Sure am I that no mother and children could have borne the heavy trials and afflictions that this man's loving family have borne with more patience and fortitude; and equally sure I am, from what I have seen and know, that no man is more deserving of such a family than is he whom we seek; to know well such a family, sir, one cannot but have a more favorable opinion of mankind."

"I doubt not the truth of what you say," said old Basil, "for, limited as my acquaintance with the lady and her children is, I have learned the character of the children in their artless manner and bright, glad faces; and I have discovered in the wife the loving, hoping, trusting, Christian woman. The man who is fortunate enough to come within the scope of the influence of a good woman must necessarily be exalted; he cannot but arise above the mere *animal* man. There is nothing earthly that approaches so near the angel state as a pure, good woman. Her brow is ever encircled with a lovely halo, which even to behold is happiness. That pure soft light that comes streaming down to earth through the ever open portals of heaven falls on her face and is reflected thence on everything around; and he that stands in the light, by tracing back the ray, may catch glimpses of the beauteous realm from whence it came.

"Woman, frail and weak, yet how strong! Afflictions that fall with force sufficient to crush the giant she bears upon her feeble shoulders. Sorrows that cause the strong man to sink writhing to the earth,—disappointments that cause him to faint and despair,—clouds that arise before him and hide away the glory scenes he so loved to gaze upon;—these press heavily

upon *her*, too; these lie crushing on her heart as well as on his; these gloom *her* pathway, too; but how she looks up! How, still, she trusts! never losing sight of the guide-light that glimmers through the gloom above, however deep that gloom may be, but ever struggling on! Oh, precious woman! angel mother; loving, trusting wife; affectionate sister; daughter; gentle friend: how glad, dear companion, how joyous may be the journey of life with you!

“Precious woman: that brings us forth into the life that Omniscience wills; that encircles us with her affectionate arms, and holds us, feeble and helpless as we are, to her loving bosom,—to the heart that throbs with ours,—to the pure fountains that gush forth there and give us sustenance. How beautiful is life with precious woman for a companion in the journey! Her sweet smile is the first light that falls on our unconscious faces; her words of love are the first strains of music that touch our ears and soothe with their melody our early griefs; she is with us at first; she is at our side as we start upon the journey; she never departs from us; however dark the clouds that may arise, she continues with us to cheer us through hours of gloom; however fierce the tempests shriek and howl, however chill the wintry blast, she leaves us not alone. She is ever with us: to love, to cherish, to make glad while the journey of this life lasts; and who knows but that that sweet face that was first to greet us with the light of its smile upon our coming into *this* life, will greet us first upon our passage through the portals of the next?”

“And yet,” said François, “look at the other face of your picture: how dark it is! Heaven and beauty are on one side, hell and dreariness on the other. Look at her that steps aside from the paths of rectitude and virtue and goes wandering through the gloom that has no star to light it,—upon her that has erred! See her as she steps from the precipice: how rapidly she falls—falls! how deeply she plunges in the dark gulf! Wings on the angel of virtue waft her up, up, up into the light of heaven,—into the light that wraps her form in rarer brilliancy and splendor the higher she ascends. Wings on the falling angel bear her swooping down, down, down into the abyss of utter blackness, where deeper grows the gloom the lower she descends. Ah, who can witness the falling angel’s flight and not weep!”

"Who approaches at this late hour?" called out a voice from the shore, at which the boat had nearly arrived.

"Friends, Socrates," said old Basil.

"Ah! so you have returned, profound and venerated sir! I am truly glad at your coming, for I have done nothing since nightfall but to sit here and watch for you."

"What has occurred in my absence, friend Socrates, to render my presence so necessary?"

"Nothing has occurred: everything remains in *statu quo*; but there is exactly where the difficulty lies. The packages are in the very spot that Nancy placed them (except that I have the bag of money in my pocket), and she herself has scarcely stirred since you left. No persuasion can induce her to arise or eat or drink until she shall have your permission to do so; for she is firmly convinced that the instant she should attempt to leave her place, that instant she would shoot out from the beach five hundred miles and then plunge headforemost down forty miles to the bottom of the sea. She has not even spoken a word since you left, except to answer crustily when questioned; and all she does is to sit there with her long bony arms hanging at her sides, her head bowed, and rolling her sullen eyes around when one goes near her."

"Who is the woman you speak of?" asked François, as the three men made their way along the dark path toward Stam's house.

"It is one of your falling angels, François,—a poor, miserable creature, who stands gloomily upon the grave's brink, with the burden of many years of crime resting upon her head. Sin and wretchedness are graven deeply upon her forehead, and in her bosom are harbored revenge, hate,—death. Dishonor dims the lustre of her gray hairs. Infamy sits unveiled in her deep, fierce eyes, and gazes coldly out without a blush. Misery has deeply scarred her haggard cheek; and shadows hang around her too dark and dense, it seems, for heaven's sunlight to penetrate. Wherever about her your eyes may turn, there the finger-prints of sin are seen; and, whether she be far or near, going, or approaching, the merest glance will tell you that she is a creature to be feared and shunned. Whithersoever she may turn her steps, there go shadow and darkness. The very flowers and green leaves seem to fade and lose their beauty when she draws near to them;

the voice of merriment and joy is hushed until she has passed; glad faces pale in her presence,—ay, even innocence stands shuddering while she continues near. Poor falling angel!”

“I think you had better remain here at the step until I go into the house and light these fagots,” said Socrates; “for it seems to be very dark in there.”

“No,” said old Basil, as he stepped in. “We may help you to light them.”

A few coals were glowing on the hearth, affording but a feeble relief to the deep darkness that reigned around.

“Are you asleep, Stam?” asked Socrates.

“No. What are you going to do, Socrates?”

“Doctor Skyelake has returned, bringing a strange friend with him. And I wish to light these sticks, so that we may see one another, for I love the light. Like the shoemaker of Bagdad, if I had but two farthings of daily income, with one of those two I should purchase a candle to burn at night. I am a zealous advocate for light. More intimate acquaintance and more lasting and agreeable friendships are formed in the light than in the darkness. Darkness has a great number of ugly brothers, of whom are superstition, doubt, distrust, suspicion, and jealousy. Light abhors all of these, and so do I. More crime is committed and more misery brought upon mankind during the hours of darkness (and those are the very hours when men should be asleep and at rest) than during the day,—the very time for men to be awake and active.

“Suppose, Stam, that I should be sitting here on this stool, in the corner opposite to you, while the room should be dark as it now is,—you might relate the most interesting thing in the world in the most pleasant and agreeable voice and manner, yet what you would say would be the merest dry prose to me. Let me, by all means, *see*, as well as feel, hear, taste, smell, and think! Who could feel interest in a discourse that should be pronounced behind a wall? Who would give a snap to hear an oration pronounced by one as eloquent as Cicero, if the orator should be shut up in a room and the audience on the outside? It matters not how distinctly the orator’s voice may be heard, or how thin the walls that intervene, I should gather as much wisdom from the chattering of a monkey as from him.

“There! now the fagots are blazing! I will venture to say, Stam, that forty new ideas have come into your mind in the

single instant that you have been glancing around you at the objects that the light has revealed. Probably not one of these ideas would ever have come if it had continued dark. Yes, give me light ! By all means, let me use my eyes as much as I can ; let them be picturing upon the mind the beauties of God's glorious creations, for I take it that that was their chief purpose. Let me *see*, and I am content. I care not how many approaches there may be to the human heart, the very shortest cut of them all is through the eyes."

It was seen, when the fagots got to blazing, that Stam and Kate were occupying a couple of the low stools at one end of the fireplace. Although it was now past midnight, neither of them had closed their eyes for sleep. They had been sitting there for hours thinking, and proposing, and discussing plans for their future course in life ; but much as they desired to leave the coast and seek a home in some other place, they had not yet been able to mark out any certain line that they could follow. The world around them was one great unknown, unexplored region, every spot in which, viewed through their eyes, was exactly alike, and no spot more inviting to them than another : and now, at this late hour, they had positively resolved on only one thing, that was to move out somewhere into the great unknown.

The return of Doctor Skyelake at that late hour seemed to be as great a surprise to Stam and Kate as had been his sudden departure on the afternoon before ; and now for some moments they sat, mutely looking up at him and the stranger who stood at his side.

"Stam," said Doctor Skyelake, "I have come for you and Kate. The boat is at the landing and only waits for you."

"Come for us ? For what ?" asked Stam.

"To take you across to the island."

"To the island ? For what ?" asked Kate.

"Do not hesitate, my friends," said Socrates. "It is the great man's desire that you should go ; that is enough : go without a question ; and my word for it, you will never regret it."

"Where on the island ?" Stam asked.

"To the house of Lucifer and Comfort Grindle."

"Come," said Socrates, "or the torch will burn too short to light you to the boat." Saying this he stepped out of the

door carrying the blazing torch, and was soon followed by the three other men and Kate. Socrates led the way toward the boat. But the party had not got ten steps from the door of the hut before the voice of Nancy was heard calling out in a troubled tone, "Ain't you goin' to take this spell off me before you goes off ag'in?"

"Really, madam," said Socrates, as he turned and went toward her, holding the torch higher than his head as he went, and peering forward under it, "we had forgot you. I am glad you spoke, or very probably we would have passed on without thinking about you. But why will you continue to sit here in this manner?"

"You know why," she answered, sullenly.

"Stand up!" Doctor Skyelake commanded, "and go where you will; I will see you at another time!"

"Where will you let me go?" she asked, as she arose to her feet.

"I have told you,—wherever you will."

"May I go into the house, Stam, and git somethin' to eat?"

"Yes, mammy," said Kate, in a compassionate tone; "come in and set here in the corner and take the pan and eat; Gilsey and me cooked what's in it for you. Then, when you gits done eatin', go and lay on the bunk yonder, side o' Gilsey; I know you're a-tired."

"I shall remain here, venerated sir," said Socrates, "until your return from the island, unless you will need my services in assisting to work the boat."

"There is no necessity for you to go, Socrates," said Doctor Skyelake.

Socrates made a profound and dignified bow, then took his seat on one of the stools near the hearth; and Doctor Skyelake and his party made their way toward the landing.

Socrates, who sat at the opposite side of the hearth from Nancy, did nothing for some time but stare vacantly up the chimney-flue in dead silence; and while he was doing this Nancy was making herself very busy devouring the contents of the pan which she held on her lap.

Socrates had a motive in remaining. It had flashed upon his mind that a more opportune time than this very night would never occur for him to deliver his lecture on the Pear

Theory. Stam and Kate had gone; Gilsey and the baby were asleep; Nancy and himself were left, as it were, alone. Surely a most opportune time: night waning toward the wee hours; the fire blazing cheerfully in the chimney; all quiet without; all still within except the gentle breathing of the children and the cricket's chirrup; Nancy at one end of the hearth, he at the other. If the lecture should happen not to be delivered to-night, probably Nancy Weathers would continue in eternal ignorance of the Pear Theory!

So near to the chimney was Socrates' seat, and so thin and light was the smoke that streamed up through the flue of headless barrels, that he could see clean out through and beyond the topmost barrel a little star, that was twinkling away up yonder in the blue-black sky. He gazed long and intently. Yes, a star,—*a pear-shaped star!* a perfect pear; he could see it distinctly; perfectly plainly; an even, regular *pear*, stem and all! Oh, what a discovery! and all by accident, too! Who had ever thought that a chimney-flue, formed of headless barrels, one on top of another, was in very truth the most perfect of telescopes! What a gorgeous plume for the cap of science! The spark that had been glowing in the soot up the chimney went out; Socrates lowered his eyes and turned his face, now beaming with mute joy, toward Nancy, who at that very instant was in the act of cramming her mouth full of fish and potatoes. He spoke not then, for his heart was too full of its gladness. Again he glanced up the flue. Yes, the pear-star had crossed the disc of his telescope! Again he lowered his eyes and looked benignly over at his companion. Her mouth was now as wide open as it could be stretched, and she was on the eve of vomiting! A bone three or four inches long and bow-shaped, in the foolish attempt to steal down her throat with the potatoes and fish, had come to a dead halt before getting two inches on its way, and was now threatening to play sad havoc with all that had gone before. But the forefinger and thumb of Nancy succeeded in staying the career of the mad experimentalist; the bow-bone was brought forth and flirted spitefully into the fire.

"Let me have the pan, madam," said Socrates; "and allow me to pick out the bones for you, so that you may have nothing to do but sit and eat;" while saying this he reached over and gently took hold of the pan-handle.

But Nancy only clamped the pan with both her hands and held it firmly on her lap; her face, that was turned full on that of Socrates, was the perfect picture of indignation. "I should guess," she said, "that I ought to know how to pick out bones by this time!"

"Excuse my seeming impoliteness in laying hold of the handle," said Socrates; "I did it through the kindest motives, I do assure you, madam:—but really, I must go and get more sticks for the fire, or there will not be light enough to enable you to distinguish between bones and fish." Saying this Socrates arose and went hastily out of the door. It was not long before he returned with an armful of sticks, which he placed on the fire, then he resumed his seat.

Nancy got through eating, and set the empty pan in the corner; then she wiped her greasy mouth well on the ragged sleeve of her frock; then thrusting her hand into her dress bosom, she brought forth a pipe and some tobacco and made quiet preparations for smoking. After filling her pipe, she reached forward and scraped it in the hot ashes, brought the stem to her lips, and drew away vigorously until she had got it well lighted; then turning square around, she propped her back against the jamb and puffed away with great gusto.

If there was anything upon earth that Socrates abominated it was every shape and form of tobacco, especially fumes from a filthy pipe. But he was a gallant gentleman, and too well bred to except to anything that a lady might see fit to do, or to show by any action of his body or even expression of his face that he harbored even *mental* exceptions.

The greater part of the smoke that boiled out of Nancy's mouth seemed, strangely enough, to roll over in a bee-line toward Socrates' capacious nose; then to stream up into the suction, until his stomach and brain and bowels and lungs were all filled to their utmost tension and capacity. He had a continual inclination to cough and sneeze, but he was firmly resolved not to be so ungallant as to do either; the consequence was, that several times he was on the very point of bursting wide open; and he was at last only saved from doing so by rushing to the door and poking his nose and mouth out into the fresh night air, and standing there long enough to force out the poisonous fumes, and to draw in enough of the cool, sweet air to fill the places that they had occupied.

Still Nancy continued to sit there, with her back and the back of her head leaning against the jamb, smoking,—ay, drinking, as it were, the delicious nectar, of which she had been for so many long hours deprived. There seemed to be a supernatural serenity resting upon her haggard face. Surely those fumes, or something else, had for the time driven the devils out of her heart; for now Nancy Weathers was as tranquil as an autumn moon. She would draw away until the hollows in her cheeks were deep enough and long and broad enough to contain duck-eggs; then, after bringing a barrel of smoke into her lungs and stomach, instead of driving it out in great extravagant, spendthrift gusts, she would breathe it out in light streams through her nostrils, or let it boil and billow up by its own specific gravity from her wide-open mouth. And, oh! after one cloud had arisen and rolled slowly away, how serenely she would again put the suction on, and keep it on until another barrellful was drawn into the elastic reservoir, to be prisoned there a few moments, and then suffered to boil and billow up and out as the last had done!

Several times Socrates glanced around from his place in the doorway to see how matters were progressing at the jamb. At one time he would be nigh upon the point of despair; but then he would remember that he was a man and a philosopher, and he would take heart again. The lecture must be delivered, smoke or no smoke. So, by way of turning the deep and placid thoughts of his audience into the channel that he desired them to take, as well as by way of preface to the lecture, he looked up into the sky, remarking, as he did so, "What a magnificent star is this nearly in the zenith! Really, I can see its pear-shape by the naked eye!"

One might have thought then that the stolid woman was as deaf as a post, for she moved not a muscle, nor even winked her eyes.

"No sane person," continued Socrates, "who knows anything of the *Pear Theory*, can doubt. *I undertake to say that no sane person can doubt!*"

Still Nancy moved not. Her face was upturned; her eyes were fixed on the ridge-pole in the top of the roof; the crown of her head was resting against the jamb. At that very time a great cloud of white smoke was billowing out of her mouth.

Socrates gazed in silence a few minutes: he thought that

possibly when that cloud should arise and hang clear of the great yawning crater, the woman might reply. But, no; again the suction was put on, and the placid eyes seemed to have stuck their claws in the ridge-pole. The philosopher went and seated himself on his stool, and began with the lecture. He began by exposing errors of Galileo, Copernicus, Newton, and others; but this was done with extreme tenderness and delicacy, and much credit he accorded to those "masterly," "Herculean" intellects.

The lecture had reached out to the length of about an hour and a half. Socrates saw nothing, knew nothing, but his subject. The fire had died almost out, and only a faint weird light was shed around the room from it. Nancy snorted! the sound was a sputtering one; it was like wind-suction through a water-pipe that has been almost exhausted of its water; it was terrific coming as it did in that stilly hour of the dark night. In less time than the tenth part of a second Socrates had sprung to his feet and crossed the hearth, and stood stooping, with his face within a foot of Nancy's, peering, straining his eyes to make out what manner of expression rested within the dim outline of her face. The light was too faint; he stooped down, and nervously gathered the chunks together, and blew up a blaze. Then he sprang up again, and again stood staring into the woman's face. Her eyes were closed; her mouth so wide open that the two rows of little black snags and fangs were full two inches apart. The crown of her head was still against the jamb, and her eyes were still in a position to see the ridge-pole the first thing upon opening.

The disgusted orator stepped quietly back to his stool, leaned *his* back and the crown of *his* head against the jamb at his end of the hearth, aimed *his* eyes up toward the ridge-pole, and closed them. And then *he* went fast to sleep.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

EXPEDITION IN THE FLYING COMET TO THE SOUTH POLE.

THE mind of Socrates Junior was of that active kind that knows not rest, sleeping or waking. He had not been sitting there with his back and the crown of his head resting against the chimney-jamb exceeding ten minutes before he began to have one of the most extravagant dreams that could be thought of. But how differently individuals of the human family are constituted! Another weary spirit might have rested there for ten hours, instead of ten minutes, and continued during the whole time utterly unconscious of the existence of anything and everything in the universe, even of its own being; ay, as an instance, she that sat sleeping at the other end of the hearth had been there more than an hour as one stone-dead,—as one from whom the spirit had departed, leaving nothing behind it but flesh and blood and bones. One will go when the early shades of evening come creeping on and nestle in the bosom of kind old Morpheus, nor peep out once until those shades have passed away; another knows no rest until the midnight hour has come and passed along; another never rests, and such a one was Socrates Junior. True, *sleep* came to him, but never rest; for even in sleep the busy mind was ever weighing, measuring, planning, reasoning, theorizing,—ever searching, prying into the deep cosmos for something not yet found,—searching, prying, even in sleep.

Socrates dreamed that he was about to undertake a voyage to the South Pole, for the purpose of satisfying himself by a practical test of the positive truth of the Pear Theory.

The first thing he did was to advertise in the *Gazette* for a proper ship to take him out. That ship (so the advertisement had it) must be stanchly built, of the burden of seven hundred tons at least, and well rigged and trimmed. The captain and officers must be educated navigators and pilots; the crew must consist of able and experienced seamen,—men enured to hardship, and all, from captain to cook, must have taste for scientific investigation. The ship must be clean, well

ventilated, and provisioned with an abundant supply of fresh, wholesome food. The price offered for a charter for the round trip out and back was twenty-five thousand dollars. The proposal was quite a lengthy document, and contained much reasonable and well-expressed minutiae, but the substance of the leading features of it were as above set forth.

Before this advertisement had made its fourth appearance in the *Weekly Gazette*, Socrates had received answers from three hundred and thirty-four captains,—all of whom represented their ships to be stanch good sailors, themselves as educated navigators, and their crews as able seamen and men of intelligence and extensive experience.

The whole thing was so novel that more than one-half of the three hundred and thirty-four agreed to undertake the voyage for less than the price offered, and some of them for even one-half that price.

Letters poured in at such a rate that Socrates found it necessary to discontinue the advertisement after its third appearance, and for two level weeks he had not time to do anything but write polite answers to the captains, declining their offers of service, and thanking them in the name of science for the lively interest manifested by them in so noble a cause.

Among the letters received was the following :

“SIR,—My ship, the Flying Comet, is $699\frac{4}{5}$ tons burden, custom-house measurement. She is American build,—stanch, and what you might call new. There are five officers, including myself, and twenty-two of the crew,—every man on board warranted to know exactly where his place is and what his business is, and not one but that can start at the end of the jib-boom and climb backward up the stay to the foretopmast truck ; thence from masthead to masthead ; thence headforemost down to the end of the main-boom ; thence still on down the sternpost to the keel (fourteen feet under water when ballasted) ; thence by the keel and up the bows to the end of the jib-boom again. This is my test of a first-class seaman ; and I mention the fact here that you may understand that we know something about climbing in the rigging, and that we have great endurance, and are able to continue a long time under water without drowning. But I have one thing to say that probably no other captain who has offered his ship to you

has been able to say, and I think that one thing may induce you to charter my ship in preference to any other that has been offered, for I think it would be of great advantage to you in such an expedition as you propose to make: that one thing is that every individual of the officers and crew of the Flying Comet was born and reared in extremely cold climates, and is therefore capable of enduring intense cold. I am a Norwegian,—born at North Cape; two of my mates are Laplanders, the third is an Icelfander, and the fourth a Greenlander. Of the crew six were born and raised in Terra del Fuego, and ten are Spitzbergeners; and, though none of the remaining six know where they were born, yet I am positively certain that they came from very cold countries, from the fact that five of them are not thoroughly thawed yet, although they have been in the North Temperate zone for years, and the sixth, who shipped with me six months ago, is frozen from head to heels as hard as a brick yet.

“My ship is at your service at the price named, provided the time for the round trip shall not exceed three years. At the expiration of three years from the day we leave port, I must be paid at the rate of ten thousand dollars a year.

“My steward, Skaats Rack, a Spitzbergener, writes this letter at my request (for, though I speak it fluently, I cannot write a word of English), and I have authorized him to sign my name to it.

“BLOUGH THOMM,

“*Capt. Ship Flying Comet,*

“Per SKAATS RACK, *Std.*

“P. S.—We all speak English.

“N. B.—In your reply address *Blough Thomm*, and not *Blue Tom*, as many will have it.”

There was something about Captain Blough Thomm's letter that pleased Socrates amazingly. He read it over three times, and then concluded to close the bargain without delay. True, the letter was not written by the captain's own hand, but then no doubt he dictated it word by word, and therefore, after all, it was Captain Blough Thomm speaking for himself. There was an openness, a frankness about it that was in none of the other three hundred and thirty-three; and one of the pet expressions of Socrates was: “A *candid* man's the noblest work

of God." Capt. Thomm did not attempt to conceal the fact that his ship lacked something of seven hundred tons burden; he did not say that his ship could sail faster than any other ship in the world; he did not propose to take one cent less than twenty-five thousand dollars for the service; nay, he let it be distinctly understood that he should charge more than that sum if the voyage should be spun out longer than three years; he did not say that the dullest fool of his crew had more sense than Plato of old; the substance of what he did say was simply: "Here am I, here is the Flying Comet, and here are the terms: accept us if you like." But particularly Socrates was struck by what the captain said about his officers and crew,—that they had all been born and reared in extremely cold climates. Here was a great advantage, indeed; for no doubt it would be found to be very cold down about the end of the pear stem; but, with all the rest, he was much pleased with the name of the ship. The bargain with Captain Blough Thomm was closed without delay.

The Flying Comet sailed out on her voyage from a North American port early in the month of August, and on the first day of the following February she had reached a point one thousand miles south of Cape Horn, or not far from the seventieth degree of south latitude, and was still ploughing rapidly on to the southward, having so far met nothing to impede her headway, and with the probability very strong (judging from appearances) that she would meet no hindrances; and that therefore she would have nothing to do but to sail right on through the pole and up on the other side,—for it must be remembered that at that time the Antarctic Continent had not even been dreamed of.

On that first day of February the skies were clear and the weather pleasant, it being then in the midst of summer in that southern latitude. Socrates, who had become very intimate with the captain, and had taken great pains to let him into the light of the Pear Theory, was sitting in his favorite seat on deck near the tiller, conversing with the captain,—that is to say, Socrates had much to say upon scientific and philosophical subjects, and Captain Blough every now and then said "yes" or "no," or grunted assent or dissent in some other way (which was the part that the captain invariably took in conversations upon such subjects), when the first mate, the

most uncompromising skeptic that Socrates had to deal with on shipboard, came aft and seated himself near them.

The first mate, who no doubt had come up for the purpose of listening to the conversation that was going on (though he pretended not to be paying the least attention to it), had not a word to say to any one, but only looked out first on one side of the ship, then on the other, then into the rigging, then up in the sky. But Socrates, who was a man of remarkable penetration, guessed the whole secret in a jiffy, and set to work thinking how he might twist the conversation with the captain into such a shape as to bring out argument with which to hammer and pound the first mate, after a sideways, accidental fashion, while he might appear not to intend to touch him, even in the gentlest manner. After a little mental arrangement he said,—

“So you are convinced, at last, Captain Blough, that we inhabit a pear whose little end is the south pole?—No further doubt about *the pear*,—ha, ha, ha! —eh, captain?”

“None in the world,” said the captain. “I should say we was getting down well towards the little end of the stem at that.”

“Let’s see about that,” said Socrates, reflecting. “It is a very large pear,—some eight thousand miles through from bottom to top, you know. I should say that the stem to such a pear would be a thousand miles long; then we are probably five hundred miles from the big end of the stem yet, which would place us fifteen hundred miles from the little end. Do not understand me to say, captain, that the earth has a stem like a pear,—literally *a stem*,—for the slope from top to bottom is very gradual and regular, but I use the word stem because it is apt. About fifteen hundred miles from the little end I should say, captain.”

“Fifteen hundred miles?” said Captain Blough Thomm, with an expression of great surprise upon his face as he spoke. “The stem a thousand miles long? Is that the way she tapers out?”

“Exactly,” said Socrates. “I imagine, captain, that the little end does not exceed two feet in diameter, and that it is perfectly round at the point.”

“I swear!” said Captain Blough Thomm, forgetting for the time the philosopher’s presence; “two foot, and round at the

p'int? Man! if you are right in your calculations, we'd better heave her to now, and go back, for I'll be d——d if she don't git hogged rounding such a p'int as that!"

"Ice ahead!" called out the man from the main-crosstrees. "Keep her off about two p'ints or we'll be into it!"

"Ice, eh?" said the captain, still looking into Socrates' face; "apt as anyway the whole stem is a solid icicle; and if that be so, and we should happen to get raised up on it, we're going to slide off, sure as gun; mind what I tell you!"

This was one of the longest sentences that the captain had been heard to utter since the ship started out from port. It was plain to see that he was more than ordinarily excited,—not that he was afraid for himself, for there was not the least spark of cowardice about him; but he loved his ship better, if anything, than he did his wife, and he was appalled at the thought that he might lose her.

It was a long time before Socrates could utter a single word that could be understood, for laughing at the captain's simplicity. "*Slide off*, eh?" he said, as soon as he was able to articulate. "Oh, no, Captain Blough, depend upon it, we shall not slide off,—icicle or no icicle, we shall be apt to keep on. There is a force acting upon us, and that will *continue* to act; a force that the great Sir Isaac Newton would call *attraction of gravitation*, but which I prefer to call *magnetism*; that is amply sufficient to keep us on, even if the stem should dwindle to the size of a knitting-needle. To speak figuratively, captain, our ship is suspended from a lofty object by a strong chain and staples, therefore, you see that there can be no *sliding off*; nor is it possible that there should be any *falling*, unless the staples should draw out or the chain break; both which things are impossibilities."

After hearing this, the captain quieted down as calm as a dish. Either the words convinced him that he had no cause to fear, or they grounded him more firmly in the belief that things were not exactly right, for he said not another word on the subject; all he did was to give up the tiller to the first mate, and then order some of the men aloft to unfurl the sky-scraper, which is the very topmost sail on the mizzen-mast.

Socrates took it that his argument had fully convinced the captain, and he was glad in his heart that the first mate was present to hear and see what was said and done. He doubted

not but that the captain had ordered the sky-scraper to be spread out to the fair breeze because now he apprehended no danger ahead, and because he desired to make the voyage in as short a time as possible. As to the warning of "ice ahead," that was a matter of so little consequence that it was not worth the notice; if the man in the crosstrees really saw ice, no doubt it was a mere sheet, no thicker than a pane of common window-glass; and what of that!

Socrates had never been in a happier state of mind. He glanced toward the first mate, with a view to ascertain, if possible, from the expression of his face, how he was affected. He hoped to see his face beaming with thankful smiles at the valuable instruction that he had received; and already he had marked out a line of conversation with him. But, instead of a face lighted with beaming smiles, he was confronted with one of the grummiest, grimmest scowls that it had ever been his lot to behold. So instead of venturing upon argument with the first mate, he arose and went amidships, and seated himself on the gunwale at the side of the captain, who was sitting there with his face upturned, looking to see how the men up in the rigging were getting on with the sky-scraper.

"Will you give me your attention for a few minutes, captain?" Socrates asked, blandly.

"Certainly," said the captain, in a very polite manner, as a pleasant smile played all over his sun-brown face; "not for a *few minutes* only, but for six full hours; for you see I have any quantity of leisure time now."

"I think I can give you a better idea of the *force* that I was speaking of than was conveyed to you by the chain-and-staple figure."

"Why, *that* was a plain enough figger for me," said the captain. "Seems to me it's as plain as the nose on a man's face. But go on."

"This," said Socrates, "that I hold in my right hand is a pewter bullet whose weight is exactly one ounce. This that I have in my left hand is nothing more than a piece of cord, or doubled-and-twisted cotton twine, four feet long. I have tested the strength of this cord, and find that it is capable of bearing the weight of four pounds avoirdupois,—that is to say, it will bear the weight of sixty-four pewter bullets like this that I hold in my right hand without snapping. Observe, that there

is a little hole drilled through the centre of the bullet. And see, now; I thread one end of the cord through the hole: see, again; I tie a knot in the end of the cord, which is to prevent the bullet from slipping off. Observe; I wrap the other end of the cord three times around my right hand fore-finger; and now the bullet is revolving around and around my finger. The finger is a *force* acting upon the bullet and causing it to revolve in the air around it; the cord is another force, holding the bullet in its orbit. If it were not for the first force (the fore-finger) the bullet would have no motion at all: if it were not for the second force (the cord) the bullet would fly off in a straight line, instead of revolving around the finger. If the bullet had not substance, weight (in other words, if it were not ponderable matter), it would not revolve at all. Observe, that the bullet revolves around and around my finger, at exactly the same distance from it all the time."

"I see," said the captain, with an expression of face that told that he was wondering why it was that Socrates had used so many words, and taken such a roundabout way to explain so simple a matter.

"See again," said Socrates, nervously; "the bullet is *now* ascending; *now* it has reached its greatest height; and *now* it is descending: and so, over and over it goes, so long as the two forces continue to act upon it. The circle that the bullet describes we will call its *orbit*. See how the body wheels in its orbit!"

"I see," said the captain again. "Well?"

"Let us call the lowest point in the bullet's orbit the south pole, and the highest point the north pole."

"Well; that's good enough," said Captain Blough Thomm.

"Now then," said Socrates, with a triumphant expression upon his face, "we will apply the whole matter of the bullet and its orbit, and the two forces, to our case. The orbit is the surface of the earth; the bullet is our ship; magnetism is the force in one case as in the other. Now observe again, the bullet (our ship) is descending lower and lower in its orbit (the surface of the earth), and will continue so to do until it reaches its lowest point (the south pole); it arises now until it reaches its highest point (the north pole); and so on it goes, ascending and descending. What do you think of your 'sliding off'—more properly *flying* off—now, Captain Blough? Remember

the cord (magnetism) keeps it going around, as well as that it holds it in its orbit. Is it not all clear enough now?"

"Clear as mud!" said Captain Blough Thomm, in a half exclamatory manner, yet looking wistfully astern as he spoke. "Yes; I see it all now!"

Day after day the ship continued on in her southward course,—now through fields of ice, and now through great open seas, until, according to the captain's calculation, she had reached latitude $83^{\circ} 40'$ south.

Here things looked extremely gloomy; for all before them seemed to be a solid mass of ice, except that here and there were little serpentine streams; but into one of these little streams the ship entered and continued on, for it was fully determined to sail on as long as the ship would sail; and possibly these little streams continued clean on and around up the other side. Captain Blough Thomm thought otherwise, but he was determined not to throw cold water on the blaze of hope by any word of his, so he steered on, in the interest of science, and because he desired to perform faithful service for his employer.

As soon as Socrates was informed of the latitude, he went and gazed in deep silence for an hour or more over the bow. The little stream in which the ship was sailing was narrowing all the time. The weather was growing intensely cold, and clouds were heaving up from horizon all around. Socrates' secret heart quaked: yet it would not do to let his fears be known, by word or action, or even by the expression of his face; he must smile and laugh to encourage the others, even if his heart should freeze through and through while he was doing it. So, breaking forth in the loudest laugh that had ever been heard from him, he walked briskly back to the tiller and seated himself in his usual place.

"Well, how do things look over the bows?" asked the captain, with a laugh at least twice as loud as that of Socrates.

At hearing this peal of boisterous merriment, Socrates himself ceased laughing as instantly as if he had been shot with a bullet through his heart, and stood gazing in astonishment at the man, and wondering whether he had not become insane. At last, however, he succeeded in mustering up a sickly cadaverous smile, as he answered,—

"They look a little darkly, to be sure; but we must expect the *darks* as well as the *lights*, you know, Captain Blough; ten to one if we don't get through all right."

"Get through all right!" said the first mate, savagely, but with a show of smiling; "*certainly* we shall! and that ain't all, by any means. Do you see that big icicle yonder ahead?"

"Well, yes, I see it," said Socrates, his puny smiles changing instantaneously to frowns when he spoke.

"We are the richest men that live on the top of the ground!" said the first mate.

"How is that?" asked Socrates.

"Do you see that yonder big icicle?" the first mate asked again.

"Of course I see it!" Socrates answered, snappishly.

"It's the *pear stem*, mate," said Captain Blough Thomm; "call things by their right names."

"Well," said the first mate, still addressing Socrates, "we are going to make millions of dollars out of that icicle; there are two ways to do it, either of which we can take, and here they are: That icicle is ours by right, for we are the discoverers and first occupiers. *The government will pay us millions for the territory!*"

The severity of Socrates' brow somewhat relaxed. The very faintest imaginable smile appeared on his face,—revenge prompted the smile,—the first mate had all along been disposed to make light of the Pear Theory, now it was absolutely in his power to expose the first mate's ignorance. "*Territory*," he said; "Latin, *territorium*, from the root *terra*, meaning *land*. You cannot make *territory* out of an icicle, mate; ice is not *carth*, but mere frozen water!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the first mate; "it's all exactly the same, after all; for who besides us knows or ever will know but what that yonder icicle is good rich land? The number of square miles is all we need to know, and you can calculate that well enough. But, then, maybe you will like *the other way* of making millions of dollars out of it better."

"And what is *that way*?" asked Socrates, with indignation in his expression and contempt in his tone.

"It is this," the first mate answered. "Do you know that the Indian Ocean is a large body of water, filled with beau-

tiful and productive islands, and surrounded by immense and proverbially rich empires,—rich not only in fertile lands, but in gold, and silver, and precious stones?"

"I know it all," said Socrates.

"Do you know that those countries are excessively warm during the greater part of the year, and that snow and ice are just about unknown there?"

"I know it all," said Socrates.

"Do you know that ice, being lighter than water, floats, and that it is one of the easiest substances in the world to crack and split?"

"*Certainly* I do," said Socrates.

"Do you know that a good-sized iceberg would probably not entirely melt, even under a tropical sun, for months?"

"I do not *know* it," said Socrates, "but think that it is probably so."

"Do you know that ice is refreshing in summer, especially to the sick?"

"*Certainly* I do," said Socrates, impatiently.

"Then I will tell you what *the other way* is," said the first mate; "and if I do not greatly mistake, we can make this very voyage the most profitable that was ever undertaken. When we reach the head of this little creek up which we are now sailing (which from present appearance will be very soon), let us take all the saws and axes and mallets and wedges that we can get our hands on, and as soon as the wind shall chop around to the s'uth'ard and blow a gale, let us all go ashore and plough a furrow clean around the icicle, then let us pitch in with saws and axes and mallets and wedges, and crack it smooth off, then let us hitch on to it and tow it into the Indian Ocean! See there! I guess that's enough said! You know whether we should get paid to us millions and millions for cooling the air as we should do, and you know whether we should do a thriving business chipping off ice and selling it at any price that we might choose to ask."

Socrates was indignant in the extreme. For full three minutes he stood holding his hands behind his back and staring into the first mate's face; but during that whole time the first mate stood with his right hand on the tiller, staring back into *his* face with the most vacant, stolid expression of countenance

that could be thought of. At the end of that three minutes, Socrates turned upon his heel and went into the cabin, never opening his mouth to speak a word to any one.

CHAPTER XL.

SKATING ON THE AIR.

FOR hours Socrates sat sulking in the cabin. The time for rest and sleep came on, but he could neither rest nor sleep; and for two reasons: first, he was very angry with the first mate, and, secondly, he was getting to be terribly alarmed at the situation of things. Manly pride forbade his letting his fears be known, so he drew dark curtains over the windows of his heart. Yet most glad would he have been for any excuse to turn the ship back homeward. He would have been pleased at the information that the ship had reached the very head of the little creek, but it seemed that that miserable gully was endless. A mutiny among the crew would have delighted him, but it seemed that the men were more humble and obedient the farther south they got. There was but one hope left: possibly, he might get the captain into an altercation with himself, and that *might* lead into the turning of the ship's head to the northward; for, by the terms of the charter-party, Socrates had the privilege to order a change in the ship's course at any time, or even to order her homeward, only, that in such case, he would be bound to the captain for the whole twenty-five thousand dollars. This thought brought with it much gladness, and he concluded forthwith to go aft and raise some sort of a fuss on some pretext or other; so he pushed open the cabin-door, and the first thing he saw was the captain with the tiller in hand.

"Looks kind o' icy!" the captain remarked, as Socrates drew near.

"It *does* look icy, Captain Blough Thomm," Socrates replied, with a sort of hyena laugh and grin; "but then, they say 'to be cool is to be calm,' and if that be so, we shall be apt to have it calm enough; it would be *somewhat* un-

pleasant though, I should say, to have to lie here for a year or two, becalmed."

"Calm!" said the captain. "If calm means *smooth*, we shall not only *be apt to have it* calm, but we've got it so now. Look out yonder! It's going to take a smart blow to put a riddle on ice two miles thick, eh?"

"It would indeed," said Socrates. "Two miles thick! But then it *is* cold; indeed it is, isn't it, captain?"

"Hellish cold!" said Captain Blough, blowing his fingers.

"It is, sure enough!" said Socrates. "But, then, captain, do you know that I would not have missed coming away down here for millions and millions and millions of money?"

"No; I didn't know it!" said the captain, in his always blunt way of talking when on duty. "But I know that *I* would have been willing to miss it for less than half that much."

"What! At the expense of civilization, and to the great retardation of science?"

"Exactly!" persisted the blunt old tar. "And if you should ever have the chance to try me *next time*, offer me a thousand dollars to stay at home, and see whether I take it or not."

"Why, captain," said Socrates, warmly, "think of what we have *already* done for science! My theory of icebergs is conclusively established! Where do you see a single iceberg in the whole range of vision?"

Captain Blough glanced out at the icicle, but said nothing.

"Why is it that none are seen?" continued Socrates. "It is because no high mountains and promontories are here as at the north, where icebergs abound. Do you see it?"

"Yes; I see it now," said Captain Blough. But Captain Blough Thomm meant very little when he said, "I see it now," for that had got to be one of his standing expressions. And the fact is, in this instance he did not any more see it than the man in the moon did.

The chances for an altercation began to be doubtful; and now Socrates began to hate the captain on account of his good nature as much as he had before admired him for the same thing. He determined though to make one more attempt, and he said,—

"I think we shall not have much trouble to convince

croakers of the positive truth of the Pear Theory when we shall return home,—ha, ha, ha!—eh, Captain Blough?”

“It’s as easy as kiss my hand!” said the captain.

“These little streams, meandering up from the south through the ice, much resemble the capillary pipes in a pear-stem, through which the fruit receives sustenance, captain.”

“They are as much alike as two p’s,” said the captain.

“Ah, no. I must take that back,” said Socrates. “The capillary tubes do carry sustenance through the stem to the fruit, but these meandering streams in no manner assist in nourishing *our* pear. Really, there is no resemblance at all.”

“Sure enough, there ain’t!” said the captain.

Socrates grew angry in earnest. It came into his mind to tell the captain that he had deceived him about his ship; that she was an old worm-eaten hulk, or that he was no navigator. But Captain Blough Thomm was a rugged, weather-beaten old salt; and besides, he had twenty-six men under him,—all of whom were at his beck and call to do whatever he might order done; and besides that, no doubt, the first mate would be glad of an excuse to have him thrown overboard. Again, the ship was thousands of miles away from the nearest courthouse, and the captain *might* take it into his head to have him put out on the icicle to make the rest of the voyage as best he could on foot. He bit his lips until the blood started, and then went into the cabin again, and locked the door.

For thirty-six hours Socrates remained in the cabin; not speaking to a person in the time, nor even opening or unlocking the door. He did nothing in the time but walk back and forth upon the floor; then tumble into a berth, and imagine that he was crazy; then spring out and pace the floor as before. At times passion would get such a high hand, that he would curse captain, ship, officers, and crew; then he would think the matter over more calmly, and ask himself what was best to be done. And, at last,—at the end of the thirty-six hours,—he came to the conclusion to go out on deck again, and act as if nothing had happened of a disagreeable character at all: possibly he might get the captain to believe that he had taken the wrong creek, and so get him in a notion to turn back, especially if he should admit that taking the wrong channel was no fault of *his* (the captain’s), and that if they did not get an inch farther south, he would be entitled to his full

twenty-five thousand dollars. The idea was a good one, and he thought it would succeed. So, when he pushed open the cabin-door, a benevolent smile covered his whole face as completely as a doughface would have done,—forehead, chin, nose, and all.

He stepped his right foot out on deck, and then paused long enough to gaze clean around the circle of horizon. It looked as if the whole world was one solid circular plain of ice grooved into the walls of the sky. The captain stood there as usual, holding the tiller. He was smoking a short-stem pipe, and looked as if he were as happy and contented as mortal man could be. The wind was blowing a gale at the time, but the ship was flying at such a rapid rate before it that it was almost a dead calm on deck.

“Have you seen him yet?” asked the captain, addressing Socrates.

“Seen who, Captain Blough?”

“Why, the first mate,” said the captain, with a happy chuckle. “He took a notion soon after you left us that he would have a frolic on the ice; so he put on his skates and got off the ship on it. No sooner had his feet touched it than he darted off like a streak of lightning; and in less than twenty minutes he had got clean out of sight. After six hours I happened to look out on the other side and there was the first mate: he had been clean around, and now he was about to cross our bows, about a mile ahead of us, on the second round. He sailed across the creek when he came to it exactly as if there had been no creek there: I really don’t believe that he saw it at all.”

“Is it possible!” exclaimed Socrates. “But how is it, captain, that he can keep ahead of the ship, and at the same time go around and around the icicle?”

“You see the wind’s bearing *down*,” said the captain. “He makes it around like the thread of an auger. The second round he made in *five* hours——”

“*Second* round! Has he been around twice?”

“And the *third* round,” continued the captain, “in three hours and forty-two minutes. He crossed two miles ahead of us the second time, and about three miles the third time. I am looking out for him every minute now again:—there he goes! I thought we’d gain on him this round.”

Socrates looked out, and there went the first mate, sure enough, crossing the ship's bows about two miles ahead. He had taken off his red flannel shirt and lashed it on his right arm as a flag to its staff; and as he passed he waved it three times over his head, and in a short time passed out of sight again.

"It would seem to me, captain, that the first mate is in a sorry condition," said Socrates; "but then there is one consolation in the matter: the first mate could about as well be spared from the ship as any one on it. I have no doubt he is convinced of the truth of the Pear Theory, too." Socrates said this with bitterness; but the captain seemed to take it as a capital joke, for he laughed heartily.

"There is one thing that I dislike about this region, Captain Blough," said Socrates; "and that is having *so much light*: I would rather have darkness when the time for sleep comes on: this having it day a whole month at a time don't suit me at all, and I think I should never get used to it. By the way, Captain Blough, this is the 20th day of December, and therefore high noon of the South Pole day. Have you ever before experienced anything like it?"

"Me?" said the captain: "oh, yes; we have the days a month long at North Cape, where I was born and reared."

"Possible!" said Socrates.

"Oh, yes; and my folks at home have the benefit of the longest day even at North Cape, for the house that I was born in is so near the tip end of the cape that every high tide comes staving in at the front door."

"Possible! Indeed!" said Socrates.

"But talking about long days, I've heard my father (who was a whaler) say that the sun didn't go down out of his sight for three whole years once."

"Three whole years! Impossible!" said Socrates. "The very longest days at the earth's extremities,—at the very poles,—can be but six months long."

"But the long day that my father experienced happened in this way," said Captain Blough Thomm: "he started no'th from North Cape in March; passed the North Pole in June; arrived at the Equator on the other side in September; and reached the South Pole by January. Then he went on, streaking up, and got off ag'in home in March (just a year out, you see). Then, instead of stopping, he went right on in

the line he took before; and he didn't stop to anchor once until he had made the round three times, and got back safe and sound to North Cape in exactly three years from the day he started off."

"Wonderful! wonderful!" said Socrates, as he thrust the fingers of both his hands through his hair until every strand of it stood straight up, and stared down in deep, wild meditation at his great toes: "really the most rapid sailing that——"

"Exactly," said Captain Blough; "and no wonder he sailed; for he had a white-eyed tornado after him the whole time!"

"Why did he not shoot into port when he got opposite home, at the end of the first round?"

"Why, eh? well, for two reasons: first, he *couldn't* do it; second, his ship was bran new then, and on her first trip, and he'd as lief put her out to see what she could do as anyway."

"A truly wonderful feat!" said Socrates; "positively wonderful!"

"Very!" said Captain Blough, as he puffed a cloud of smoke from his lips; "very!"

All this time Socrates had been standing there with one foot in the cabin and the other on deck, and leaning against the companionway, as at first. But now he stepped the other foot out, and as he did so he glanced up into the rigging. Instantly he paused again, and, leaning his right elbow on the quarter-deck, continued to look up. Every sail that the ship had, from the largest to the smallest, was set, and every one was puffed out full of wind; and every mast and spar was bending forward before the rushing gale.

Up to this very instant Socrates had imagined that a dead calm was reigning, for not a breath of air had touched him, and now he could scarcely believe that his own eyes were telling the truth. The ship was on a perfectly even keel, and she was literally flying. For a time his delight knew no bounds, for the sight was the most glorious that his eyes had ever witnessed. The sun was hanging over the southern horizon: the fields of ice were glittering and sparkling like burnished silver and gold upon which showers of diamonds had rained: the skies were cloudless, and of a delicate pale blue, and the Flying Comet!—oh, how gloriously the Flying Comet appeared, and how she was speeding on! He counted the sails

on his fingers, and found that, including sky-scraper, cloud-splitter, moon-duster, spanker, royal, jib-a-jib, and jib-topsail, there were twenty-nine in all! But besides these, forty-three flags of different nationalities were streaming forward from the mast-heads and yard-arms.

"Beautiful! glorious!" exclaimed Socrates in an ecstasy. "Beautiful, Captain Blough! Glorious indeed, I declare!"

"Very!" said the captain, as he again puffed a cloud of smoke from his mouth, and smiled such a smile as only the heart can send out on the face.

"Who," said Socrates, "would exchange such a life as this for that of your tame land-lubber? Who, oh who?"

"Nobody," said the captain, who was in such a glee that, before he could blow out the cloud of smoke from his mouth, he set-to to chuckling; the consequence of which was that only a part of it came out at his mouth, the rest streamed from his ears and nostrils like steam from the spouts of four boiling kettles.

"And then, captain," said Socrates, "I suppose a child could steer her now, for you seem to be having your own easy time of it there at the tiller?"

"And so I am," said the captain.

"What time are we making, Captain Blough?" asked Socrates.

"Eighty knot, about."

"Eighty miles an hour? Is there not danger of flying to pieces?"

"None in the world," the captain answered, putting his pipe down on the rudder-head as he spoke, and blowing his nose with his fingers until it sounded like a very bugle.

"It strikes me," said Socrates, who could not longer conceal his alarm, "that it would be well for you to order the men to take in some of this sail, wouldn't it, captain?"

"Order the men,—eh?" said Captain Blough, as he puffed out a great round cloud of white smoke. "They are all gone!"

"Gone?—gone where?" asked Socrates, wondering.

"Gone *under*!" said the captain; "they are under the ice, and by this time some twenty miles down, I should say."

"Explain! explain!" screamed Socrates.

"Easy now," said Captain Blough Thomm, with great cool-

ness; "it is this way: all hands was down in the fore-castle, sound asleep, when we run into the sharp ice at the head of the little gully; the ice was so sharp, and the ship was moving at such a lick, that when she struck there wasn't any more jar than when you stomp your foot on the deck. Of course they've gone under, for the fact is——"

"Is what!" gasped Socrates.

The captain's pipe had gone so nearly out that it required considerable drawing and sucking, and popping of lips, and sticking of the forefinger into the bowl to get it under way again,—all which had to be gone through with before he could make any answer at all to Socrates; at last he said, "Well, the fact is that our bottom is sliced off as clean and smooth as if it had been planed off with a jack-plane."

"Captain!" said Socrates, in a frenzy, "are we lost?"

"Lost?—no!" said the captain. "I know well enough where we are; and if I could leave this tiller fifteen minutes I could tell you our latitude and longitude to a dot. We are only *descending* in our orbit like the bullet did in *its*,—that's all. Lost?—no, we are not lost!"

"Is it possible, captain," asked Socrates, "that the ship's bottom has been sliced off by the ice, and that we are sliding?"

"Possible?" said the captain; "go look down the hatchway."

Socrates rushed to the hatchway and looked down. There was no more bottom to the ship than there is to a hole in the air! It had been shaved smooth off ten feet below decks, and the ship was now streaming down the icicle toward the South Pole like a flying comet indeed.

"Thunder and lightning!" screamed Socrates, in a most unphilosopher-like manner, as he went bounding back toward the ship's stern.

"Did you find it like I said?" asked Captain Blough Thomm, blandly.

"Ah, captain, captain, captain, captain, captain!" exclaimed Socrates, "we are undone! undone! undone!"

"How so? how so?" asked the captain, in great apparent surprise. "I should say we was nearer *done* than undone; all's about it is we are getting down to'ards the swinging p'int in the orbit and there's a little hurry about it; that's all! If

nothing happens, and the wind keeps fair like it is now, we shall double the pole and get up as high as ten degrees, or about eighty south, by noon to-morrow. We're not undone, man."

"Captain! captain!" said Socrates in an agony, "how can you have the heart to make a jest of our terrible misfortune?"

"Jest!" said Captain Blough. "I'll swear I was never more in earnest in all my born days! why, man, I've been running the Flying Comet for up'ards of ten years now, and this is the quickest time by far odds that she has ever made since she has been a ship! I tell you, I didn't believe it was in her!—eighty knot! by jiminy! we are beating the old man's time, when he had the tornado after him, clear out o' sight. Jest?—You may believe I mean every bit of it!—Eighty odd knot! But even that's crawling to what we are going to do presently, for look out yonder ahead how steep it's getting to slope."

Captain Blough was now in such a state of wild glee, that he cared but little whether Socrates might choose to look out and observe the slope or not; for, the very instant after the question passed his lips, he snatched his great silver watch out of its fob, and held it before him in his open left hand, as he steered with his right.

"Captain!" groaned Socrates, "what *are* we doing?"

"Nothing! just about nothing now, to what we shall be doing in less than a minute! I'm going to time her when she starts down the slope; and I shall be badly fooled if we don't make the next thousand miles inside of two hours. But here we go over!"

No sooner had these words been uttered than the ship glided over the brink of the steep slope, and went down so rapidly on the hard bright ice, that it was with some difficulty that the captain and Socrates could catch their breath.

"Here we go hell to split!" said Captain Blough Thomm, in an ecstasy; smoking, laughing, talking, steering, and holding his watch in his open left hand, all at the same time. "And, hello! here comes the first mate, not sixty yards behind us. By jiminy, we've beat him! Yonder's the end of the stem, too; it's as sharp as a bodkin, but ain't we travelling off at a round rate?"

So great was the excitement of both Socrates and the cap-

tain, that neither of them had once observed that the sun was almost totally eclipsed,—so near it, indeed, that, at the time the captain got through with his last sentence, all that remained visible of that grand luminary was the merest golden thread of its upper limb: and just at that instant, too, the ship shot clear of the ice, right out over the pole.

Socrates was frantic. He sprang upon the rudder-head (which was within one foot of the extreme stern) and stood there a moment looking down over the stern, poising himself, and wildly swinging his hands back and forth; then he dived headforemost toward the icicle, in the vain hope that he might fall lightly and secure a safe footing there; or, better than that, that he might veer around the pole and shoot high enough up on the ascending orbit to fetch him to some place where there was natural ground and green grass to walk on, for he had got to abominate the very sight of ice; and he would prefer to alight into a swarm of snakes in the interior of the Hottentot country, than ever more to have to step his foot on ice.

So powerfully did he exert himself in the leap and plunge, that he went on in a perfectly straight line true for the end of the stem, which was about three hundred yards beneath his starting-point. Both his arms were outspread, and both of his legs were sticking out behind him, a little astraddle, and his eyes were both wide open as he went sailing down. His upside-down eyes were gazing at the ship, that had not changed her course in the least, but was making straight out in a bee-line into the great blue ocean of air. Fast as he was going, he could see that the ship was streaming away at the rate of two miles to his ten rods.

He had not got more than half-way to the icicle before he heard a voice calling out, "I am fully convinced of the correctness of the Pear Theory! Farewell!" Hearing this, Socrates rolled his eyes downward in the direction from whence the sounds came, and there went the first mate; they passed so near together that they only missed colliding by an arm's length. The first mate had cleared the ice, and was now shooting out before him in a very graceful manner, first one foot then the other, precisely as if he were still skating on the ice, and aiming as true as a die in the Flying Comet's wake.

Again Socrates raised his eyes toward the ship: he saw a little bluish cloud to roll from the decks over the stern and

instantly vanish ; it was a whiff from Captain Blough Thomm's pipe. In a few moments more the Flying Comet had got so far away that she seemed to be a moony orb, rolling under the clouds of Magellan, toward its aphelion. Then Socrates' head crashed on the flinty ice.

* * * * *

The disturbed sleeper had risen to his feet and mounted the stool that he had been sitting upon (imagining that it was the rudder-head), and after frantically swinging his hands a dozen or more times, had leaped the distance of full six feet, and fallen plumb on the top of his head in the middle of the floor. For at least two minutes he lay there flat on his stomach, scrambling about and trying to hold on to the planks of the floor ; for he was fully convinced that he was not exceeding six inches from the end of the icicle ; and he was making desperate efforts to stick his long finger-nails into the ice to save him from slipping off.

The uproar and confusion that was now reigning around him brought a glimmering of reason back to his mind. The baby was flat on its back in the bunk, kicking up its heels and screaming as only a scared baby can scream. Nancy, who had been startled from sound sleep by the heavy jar and noise, leaped forward on all fours immediately after Socrates, and went rolling and somersaulting toward the door, out of which she tumbled heels over head ; and then she arose and fled speedily away. While all this, and more, was going on, Socrates did nothing but lie there on his stomach, turning his head slowly and staring with an idiotic expression about the room.

CHAPTER XLI.

CONFUSION IN THE HUT.

"OH, me !—Oh, lorsy !—Have she busted your head open with the chimbly ? Have she killed you clean dead ?—Oh ! oh !—oh, me !"

These exclamations were made by Gilsey as she sprang to her feet and stood in the middle of the bunk, gasping for

breath before each question, and staring wildly down, first at Nancy as she went somersaulting out of the door, then at Socrates as he scrambled about on the floor.

The questions were very silly ones, but Gilsey had been sleeping soundly, and the thundering noises made by the diving forward of Socrates and Nancy in quick succession were so sudden and entirely without warning, that the only wonder was that she too had not dived out on her head without waiting to ask any question at all. She did not dive, but only stood there, still half asleep, confused and bewildered, and trembling from head to foot with fright, asking the questions that happened to suggest themselves to her mind at the instant she opened her eyes and saw Socrates *hors du combat* and Nancy in full flight from the bloody battle-field.

Socrates made no immediate answer to any of the inquiries, for, the fact was, he was no better prepared to make an intelligent answer than she was to ask an intelligent question. He had been ever since the plunge lying on his stomach and holding up his head and peering around him, exactly as a snake does; but at the hearing of the girl's voice he raised his head still higher, and gazed around more wildly than before: at the stools, the fireplace, the chest, the door, and then up into the bunk at Gilsey.

"Oh, lorsy! Is you clean dead?" the frightened girl again asked.

"Oh; *it is you!*" said Socrates. "No, I am not quite dead, I believe; but very, very near death's door!"

"It must a-been a mighty lick!" said Gilsey; "for it woked me up. What did she hit you with,—the chimbly? Oh, me!"

"No, *she* has not hit me with anything, child: it was plunging headforemost on the icicle. But get up, child, and bring a pan and gather up these brains that you will see scattered about on the floor; I desire that they shall be buried in the same grave with my body. Look here into my head: it is as clean and empty as a bowl. Ah, what a terrible situation to be in,—to have a head and not an ounce of brains in it! Come, quick, child, and gather up the brains."

"Brains!" said Gilsey. "Oh, lorsy! is they all busted out?"

"Come, come! there is no time to be lost! I wish to see

with my own eyes that you have them all in the pan before I expire!"

Gilsey leaped from the bunk and ran and snatched up the cook-pan and came and stood near Socrates, holding it by the handle. She paused then and seemed to be considering, for she had got to be nearly wide awake. "No," she said, after a few moments' thought, "'twon't do to put folks' brains into this pan, for it's what our folks puts wittles in. S'posen I runs out and gits a piece o' pine bark, or a king-crab shell; wouldn't that do 'bout as good as the pan? Oh, me!"

"Stay! stay a minute!" said Socrates, as he sat up and clamped both his hands down on the top of his head. "I believe I was mistaken about the brains: do you see any scattered around here? I *was* mistaken; my skull doesn't seem to be as badly fractured as I had supposed it was. Really, it must be an exceedingly tough and elastic skull, for I fell the distance of full three hundred yards plumb on the hard ice! Did I bounce very high, child? Ah, it is a shocking situation to be in, to have one's skull cracked into a thousand and odd stars! Run your fingers through my hair: there, do you not feel a number of cracks and broken places?"

"Ther' ain't no cracks in it as I sees," said Gilsey; "but here's a whelk bigger'n my two fists, right on the top where the hair don't grow. Oh, me! it looks as if another head was comin' out!"

"Ah!" sighed Socrates; "the wonder is that there is any head at all. Ay, truly wonderful that it was not shivered into fragments; it must be a tough icicle, too, that the end of it was not cracked off by so severe a concussion."

"Icicle!" said Gilsey. "Where's any icicle? There ain't no icicle here as I sees!"

"No icicle? Ah, yes. Go sit there on the chest, child; I believe my thoughts are rambling. Whose house is this?"

"This! Why it's where—it's where Stam and Kate and our folks lives; on North Banks. Don't you know you and granny was settin' there by the chimbly? I woked up a spell ago, and heerd you talkin' to her."

"Ah, stay!" said Socrates. "I do begin to understand it now. I have been dreaming. Yes, I suppose I must have leaped from the stool upon my head. Did you observe, child, whether Captain Blough Thomm's ship changed her course

and bore up northward after passing under the clouds of Magellan?"

Gilsey's eyes spread wide open at hearing this question. She made several steps backward in the direction of the door, then stood staring. "*Cap'n Blue Tom's ship?*"

"Ah, bear with me, child! I had forgot. I remember now,—this is the house of Stam Weathers; and I have been dreaming,—Stam Weathers's house? Is it possible that Stam Weathers or any other mortal man would choose to come and live at such a place as this? Why, child, what can your people be thinking about, to come and live on the tip end of an icicle? It is the last place in the whole world, I should say, for any sane man to erect a dwelling upon. Gracious mercy! I am sure I shall never get the consent of my mind to step my foot out of the door for fear of slipping off!"

At hearing this, Gilsey backed still nearer toward the door, then she turned her face half toward it with the evident intention of darting out and away, but, remembering the baby in the bunk, she paused and glanced toward it, trembling like a leaf.

"Don't be frightened, child," said Socrates, kindly, "for now I remember that it was all a dream; there was really no icicle, and no ship, and no Captain Blough Thomm,—only a strange dream that I have had. Don't fear. I recollect all now; here are you and I in Stam Weathers's house at North Banks. Oh, yes, I understand all about it. Certainly I do! Gracious heavens! how grandly she flew down the stem! All sails set! Forty-three flags flying! Five hundred miles an hour! There went the first mate skating along in the ship's wake, leaning forward his body; shooting out first one leg then the other, in the most easy and graceful manner; making a two-mile run on one foot, then a two-mile run on the other, and then a half-mile on both; seemingly not aware of the fact that he had arisen from the ice and was skimming on through the air! Well, I am glad the first mate was convinced. Only think, our heads lacked but twelve inches of colliding!"

While Socrates was uttering these words he was looking intently downwards. From the expression of his eyes he seemed to be gazing clean through the floor, at some object away down in the bowels of the earth. And even for some

minutes after he had got done speaking he continued to gaze at that distant object.

Gilsey, thinking that she might not have a more favorable opportunity to take the baby from the bunk and escape with it, crept noiselessly and cautiously in from the door, keeping her eye fixed upon the dreaming man as she went, and she had just succeeded in lifting the child into her arms when Socrates raised his head and arose to his feet and went and stood in the door.

"Ah, yes," he said, "here it is as plain as can be. It was a dream. Here are the sands and thickets; and yonder are the hill-tops over the trees; and here is the path that winds through the woods. Let me see. Doctor Skyelake and his strange friend were here, and they, with Stam and Kate, went off together, and it may be that they are now on their way back from the island, for the sun has been out of the sea for an hour. I have overslept myself. Yes, Nancy was sitting there at the hearth smoking her pipe. Where has your granny gone, child?"

"Last I seed of her," said Gilsey, "she rolled out, then riz and run. She's gone good fashion. I don't know where."

"Ah, no doubt she is frightened,—truly unfortunate. I must find her and explain." Saying this he stepped from the door and looked down the path. There stood Nancy near the angle, a hundred yards away. She had stopped and was gazing back, and as Socrates made his appearance, she stretched out her neck and stared as one wild.

"Come back, my dear madam," said Socrates, in a loud voice, "or else wait until I come there. I can explain to your satisfaction."

But no sooner had Nancy heard the first word than she darted away, and disappeared in the jungle.

"Poor creature!" said Socrates. "I must follow and disabuse her mind. No doubt she takes it that I am a conjurer or witch." He then ran off in the direction the woman had taken.

CHAPTER XLII.

CHANGING HEADQUARTERS.

WRAPPED in the deep shadows of the forest pines, that line the southern shores of Collington Island, sits a solitary man. He is looking out from beneath the dark curtain of overhanging boughs upon the broad expanse of star-lit waters before him. It is past midnight. No sounds have been heard by him during the long hours that he has been sitting there, except the constant plash of the little waves that come rolling in and tumbling on the narrow rim of clean sandy shore near him, and the moaning flute-notes of light winds through the tree-tops.

So silently has he continued there, that one who might have been near by and known of his presence, could not have told whether he had been awake or asleep. But now a slight rustle of the dry leaves on the ground as of one creeping cautiously over them is heard, and he emerges from the deeper darkness to the water's brink, and stands there on the hard sand, at times with hand to ear, listening; at times stooping forward and peering out. He has caught the sounds of dipping paddles, and the rush and gurgle of a boat passing through the water, and soon he discovers the dim outlines of a little skiff, and the figures of two persons in it.

The skiff is coasting along from the eastward, and seems to be about to pass on by, when suddenly those in the boat cease to ply their paddles, and sit motionless looking toward the land.

"Did you hear it?" asked one in a whisper.

"It sounded like his whistle," the other answered. "But we left him a smart piece to the westward of this. Let's drop closer in to shore:—Sol!"

"Come on,—it's me!" was the answer. "I come nigh lettin' you pass on by; but I couldn't make out but two of you in the boat, so I thought I'd call. Where did you come across that skiff, and what do you lay off to do in her?"

"We got her out of the creek," said Len Curt, "and we've

been plannin' to cross to the other side of the sound in her, for it seems there ain't no use to stay here any longer. She's a light thing, and she's got three good paddles in her, so it won't take us long to git over; we can drive her a six-knot lick through water as slick as we've got it now."

"Where do you aim to go?" asked Sol.

"That's accordin'," said Len. "We can cross to the island first: then maybe we'll take a notion to run over from there to Croatan. But it's hard to calculate ahead in sich a case as this, for we mought see things on the way that would turn us one way or another. We'll go over that way somewheres, for them we are lookin' for don't use on this side of the water; we've been here long enough to find that out. Maybe if we should run over to North End and hang around there to-morrow night, we shall find out somethin' about the lights we seed there last night. Them lights was meant for one thing or another; they didn't blaze out that way for nothin'. But it's like *you* says, cap'n: if you says go, we'll go; or if you says stay here, we'll stay; or if you'd ruther put back home we'll go there."

"Really," said Pierre, "I am in a quandary. There is some mystery connected with these lights. They were, as you say, for some purpose. But is it probable that the party we are in search of has separated? And, again, if so, is it probable that any of that party are on Roanoke Island? I have thought much of the matter, but I must confess that I have been totally unable to reach any conclusion. I am disposed, however, to think with you that we had better cross to the island; *possibly* we may learn something there that will lead us into the right track."

"Them lights was meant for signals for one thing or another," said Len. "You see, news goes from the island to Croatan; then answer goes back from Croatan to the island. Maybe so there's smugglin' goin' on (for sich as that has been done hereabouts), but it runs in my head that them warn't smugglers' signals. I should ruther think that them devils has got into two gangs, and that they're up to some more deviltry. If it is them, like as any way they'll be out ag'in to-night; and then we had ought to be nearer to 'em, for it's my belief if we stays here we shan't know no more than what we does now."

"But it's too late to find out anything to-night," said Sol.

"Maybe not," said Len. "It's now two hours sooner in the night than it was last night when the lights showed; then the seven-stars was gittin' well to west'ard, now you see they're purty much overhead. If they should put off comin' out to-night as late as they did last night (and it's my belief that whoever they is, they'll be apt to take the little eend of the night to do their signallin' in), we can git over there before the time they gits at it, and not be in sich a mighty hurry about it either."

"But we're too late for to-night," said Sol, "*for they've been out already.*"

"To-night, Sol?" asked Pierre. "Have they been out to-night?"

"Have you seed 'em ag'in to-night, Sol?" asked Len, excitedly.

"It's that that brought me here," said Sol. "I've sot here and watched 'em for two hours. When you went off and left me at the p'int to the west'ard, I got to thinking maybe the lights would be showed again to-night before you got back; so I moved down here where I could have a better sight of Croatan shore; and I hadn't been here long before two lights blazed out from North End; then purty soon they was answered by two at Croatan; then the North End lights got to wavin' and dancin', and them on the other side waved and danced; then all the lights went out but one at North End, and it stayed there blazin' nigh on to two hours, I should say; then *it* went out. Ever since that, nothin' ain't been seen but the dark sound and the stars over it."

"How long has it been since that last light disappeared?" asked Pierre.

"Close on to two hours."

"It's about like I said," said Len Curt; "it can't be made out but two ways: a company of smugglers is about there hidin' away Holland gin and things that's been brought in from the West Indies; or them that we are after has got up some sort of a game betwixt Roanoke and Croatan; and it's more apt to be the last way than the first; if it turns out so, we'll be apt to come up by 'em if we works it right. You see them at the island has been tellin' different news to-night from what they did last night; for they've had double lights.

I should say that last light stayed up to steer by; and it's my belief they've all got together on the island: ten to one if every one of 'em ain't on Roanoke Island this minit! If that be so, the best thing we can do is to run across and hang around North End; for it won't be long before they are on the move ag'in, whether it be smugglers or no."

"I am disposed to think that your conclusions are correct," said Pierre, "and I doubt not but that the best thing we can do will be to follow your suggestion, and run across without loss of time."

Sol stepped into the skiff, and in a few minutes the three men were on their way crossing the dreary waters toward Roanoke Island, seven miles to the southward; and in an hour from the time they left Collington shore the dark line of the land for which they had been steering was in their view. Then all the paddles except that of Len, who sat in the stern, were taken into the boat, for it was necessary now to be extremely cautious. Even Len's paddle did nothing but trail noiselessly astern as the skiff went drifting slowly along shoreward before the light breeze.

"Would it not be well," asked Pierre, "to continue about where we are? If they are on the island, as you think, they probably have posted their pickets, who may be very near to us. Again, if they attempt to return to Croatan to-night we shall be most apt to see them, I think, by remaining where we are."

"Listen!" said Sol: "Ain't some one on the water to the s'uth'ard of us?—there! warn't that a sail rattlin'?"

"That's them! that's them!" said Len; "they're a mile or more to the s'uth'ard. That's them!"

"Let us hurry that way," said Pierre; "it may be that they will again escape us, if we are not quick!"

"One thing," said Len, as he turned the skiff's bow to the southward: "it's well enough we should study what we are doin' now. If it turns out to be smugglers, there's apt to be a smart gang of 'em, and they with guns too. Then if it's the others, like as any way there's two of them to our one, and all we've got to fight with is these paddles. Maybe we'd better follow 'em along easy-like, and find out which way they takes; and then, when day breaks, we shan't be bothered to git help enough to take 'em. Not as I'm afeerd of 'em, for I

ain't; but then there wouldn't be no use of spiling everything now that we've got the game in our hands. S'posen there's women and children, how would it be with them when a dozen or more should be hittin' and cuttin', and maybe shootin' all over and among 'em; and that too out here in the sound, and dark as it is?"

"Stop! stop!" said Pierre, "I hear their voices!"

"I see their boat," said Sol; "they've got sails on, and is headin' for the island; hold her back, or they'll sight us!"

"For God's sake stop her!" said Pierre, in a tremulous whisper, "they may see us and escape. We shall have them at greater advantage when they get on land."

"Be easy," said Len; "I know what I'm doin'. They can't see us as long as we keeps this far off. Our boat is little, and theirs is big; and they've got a sail up besides; we can watch them, and they not know anything about us. But keep still and let me work things; I'll have 'em right. What can you make out now, Sol?"

"She's got a mainsail and jib on, and is headin' for shore yet."

"Easy, then, and keep your eye on her, boy!"

It was not long before the boat reached the shallow waters near the shore. Then were heard distinctly the unshipping of the rudder, the furling of sails, the plash of the anchor, and the wading of a number of persons from the boat to shore.

"There's a woman among 'em," said Sol; "I hears her talkin'."

Pierre, too, heard that woman-voice, and he bowed his face in his hands and groaned deeply.

"Don't spile things now!" said Len Curt; "for if it's them we've got 'em safe, I'm thinkin'; we can git help enough here to take 'em if there should be twenty of 'em. But then you mustn't forgit, cap'n, that this is pertickler bizness, and it wouldn't take much to spile it."

"Have no fear of me," said Pierre; "but oh! my God, how hard it is now to obey the voice of reason!"

"I guess they've all gone up on the island," said Sol; "or if they've left any behind to picket, maybe they ain't more than what we can handle: but I guess it's well enough to be keerful, for maybe they've got guns."

"Keerful it is, then!" said Len. "We are gittin' close on 'em! Keep your eyes well open when we sides up to the boat! Hold your paddles ready to hit! Here we is!"

As Len spoke he placed his hand on the hilt of his knife, as if to be positively certain that it was still there in its scabbard at his side; then noiselessly again he plied his paddle, and the skiff glided on until it reached the anchored boat. Softly the three men arose to their feet and placed their hands on the gunwales. There they stood a time, peering over to see if any were left upon the watch; but none were there.

"It's them!" said Len; "the very devils we are after!"

"Are you sure, Len?" gasped Pierre; "are you sure?"

"It's them!" Len repeated. "This is Jim Beam's boat! We'll git 'em now! Git aboard of her, Sol; unship the mast and take the anchor in. Easy, Sol! they're close by yet! Take the skiff in tow; push her along with the sprit to'ards the North End and hide her in the rushes; wait there in her till you hears from us. Now, cap'n, me and you'll git out here and go up on the island behind 'em. Easy, Sol! they're close by yet!"

CHAPTER XLIII.

A FIERCE ATTACK.

PIERRE and Len were crouching low in the thick growth near the sound-shore when morning dawned. For two hours they had been there waiting for the return of those who had landed from Jim Beam's boat. They were near by the side of a little foot-path that went winding up from the water through the gaulberry toward the heart of the island. Their crouching-place was on the eastern slope of the ridge that bordered the sound-shore; and being at an elevation of fifteen or twenty feet above the level of the waters, the sounds and Collington Island, and the long line of sea-coast were in full view by the light of day.

More and more distinctly the yellow level, and the bald hills, and the green thickets of the coast were coming out in the

view; and continually brighter and more golden the skies that reached arching over the billowing floods away beyond the coast; until the morning sun in unveiled splendor came leaping from the deep.

Often the silent watchers wondered that no one had come near yet. Where had those gone who had landed there a few hours before? Had they other means of leaving the island than the boat that had brought them to it? And yet, if they had other means, was it not strange that they had taken so little pains to cover and conceal the footmarks and traces that they had left behind them? It might be that they had confederates upon the island; but it could not surely be that *all* the inhabitants were in league with them; and yet from their bold manner of proceeding, it appeared that such must be the case.

"This is comical!" said Len. "Maybe they spied us following after 'em. But then I guess it don't matter much, no way; for they're on the island, and we've got daylight to help us now. They won't find it so easy to dodge us in the daytime! All we've got to do now, cap'n, is to go on, and git on the trail; and when we starts 'em up they'll be apt to bear this way where they left their boat. We'll trap 'em!"

"But may it not be," said Pierre, "that those who stole Jim Beam's boat would not hesitate to steal another? No doubt there are many boats about the island that would answer their purpose equally as well as the one they came in. I fear they have escaped us, Len!"

"No; I guess it ain't that way," said Len; "they was too pertickler for that. If it had been that way, they wouldn't a-stopped to unship the rudder, and furl up the sails and anchor the boat. Then ag'in, they wouldn't a-been so fussy,—talkin' loud, and pitchin' the anchor overboard, and then wadin' and splashin' from the boat to shore. No; I guess they're on this island yet; and if so be they is, we shall know more about 'em than what we does now before night comes on ag'in. But there's no use for us to stay here squatted in the bushes any longer." And as Len spoke these words he arose to his feet and was about to step out in the path, when the rustling of bushes near by was heard, and instantly he crouched again.

"What is it?" asked Pierre, who was still crouching.

"Hush!" said Len. "Somethin's pushin' through the

bushes in the path toward us! Yonder comes one! Stay right there where you is. I'll do for him when he gits up handy!" Len had drawn the knife from its scabbard, and was holding it in his firm clutch.

"Wait, Len," said Pierre. "Permit him to pass on to the shore, so that I may see who he is. If it be one of them he will return this way."

The man passed on, within a few feet of them, to the shore.

"Is he one?" asked Len, in a whisper.

"Yes; I know him well! Stir not, Len, for *I* must deal with him. Still! he comes!"

"It'll take nimble work," said Len. "S'posen I helps you?"

"No; remain there; I will act alone."

The man again reached the place where the two were crouching, and was passing hastily by, when Pierre leaped forward and seized him by the throat. "Stay, cowardly villain!" he said. "Where are my wife and children? Tell me instantly, or before God you shall die!"

Instantly François recognized his furious assailant. "Give me an opportunity to tell you," he said, "and before the same God, you shall know all. They are near you; unharmed. Be patient; you will see for yourself."

"Brute!" said Pierre; "think not that villainous falsehood can shield you now; for now we stand on even ground! Where are my wife and children?"

François snatched his knife from its scabbard and threw it from him. "*Now* we do stand on even ground," he said; "and I am ready as an honest man to render the account that you demand. I repeat,—and before God I speak truly,—your family are safe and unharmed!"

Pierre's fingers relaxed their strengthful grip. He stepped back, still gazing into François's face. "Safe and unharmed!" he gasped. "All safe? all unharmed?"

"Ay, sir! *All* safe; *all* unharmed!"

"Kill the devil!" said Len, leaping from his hiding-place, with the drawn knife upraised. "Kill him! he lies! for see! *another* is coming in the path, and *this* one is only waitin' for help. Stand away, and let me chop his heart from him, before it's too late! See; the other is runnin' to help him! Quick, quick; stand away!"

Jeannot approached within a few feet before he recognized Pierre. He had rushed forward to take part in the struggle in defence of his friend; but now he stood as a statue; pale as snow. "Harm him not, for heaven's sake!" he gasped. "He has not wronged you; hear him patiently!"

"Devil!" exclaimed Len, as he rushed toward Jeannot; "you lie!"

"Stay, Len; stay!" said Pierre, as he grasped the man's uplifted arm. "They must be heard!"

"Hear us," said François; "then if you find that we are attempting to deceive you, inflict upon us such punishment as we may deserve."

"They must be heard, Len!" said Pierre.

"Well, then, do as you're a mind to; but it ain't *my* fashion to wait in sich a case as this. The waitin' I should do would be to chop the lights out o' one, and then *wait* till I could come up by the next one. And that's the best way to wait, too."

"We will offer no resistance," said François, "except for the preservation of our lives. But hear us; for we will speak the truth as honest men."

"I'll swear you'd better work quick!" said Len, fiercely; "for here comes another! Shouldn't wonder if it was that cussed beelzebub of a Portagee at that! You'd better let me git some of 'em out o' the way, man, afore they gathers round us too thick! Look! look! look! The whole company of 'em's comin'! *Ain't that Stam Weathers?*—Kate Weathers? and ain't that Lucifer Grindle?—Comfort Grindle? Look! look! What a company! They keeps on comin'!"

"Here, sir, come your wife and children: we are willing to rest the truth of our statements with them."

"Oh, Father in heaven!" exclaimed Marie, as she rushed forward into her husband's open arms; "and have our prayers indeed been heard? and is our loved one indeed restored to us? Oh, merciful Father!"

"Precious Marie!" said Pierre, as he clasped his sobbing wife to his heart; "and, oh, precious little lambs!—all restored? *all—all restored?* Thank God! all are restored!"

CHAPTER XLIV.

A SICK MAN.

NEVER was more joyful meeting than that of Pierre de l'Auzanne and his family. Many and affectionate were their glad greetings and caresses; and few were the dry eyes that witnessed that meeting.

Paul had predicted, at the time old Basil met his children at North End, that, when papa should be found, mamma and Lucie and Murat would cry; and that little Adele would reach out her arms toward her father and laugh. And, to that extent, the prediction was verified to the very letter; but the sage prophecy did not end there: he that had got to be so big a boy would act upon that joyful occasion very differently from all the rest; instead of crying he would express his joy by a round burst of loud laughter. But poor Paul! No sooner had he reached his father's arms, and given and received the kiss of tender love, than he buried his face in his bosom and wept and sobbed for a full half-hour.

Marie gave her husband a full account of their wanderings, and of their manner of living, and of their escapes. She had also much to say of the noble conduct of François and Jeannot. Pierre also related his many adventures, and spoke feelingly and thankfully of the generous part that those rude North Bankers had taken in his behalf. Tears stood in his eyes as he thanked, in tremulous words, the brave protectors of his helpless wife and little ones. But neither François nor Jeannot would listen to the excuses that he attempted to render for his late very rude treatment of them. They said that nothing was more natural than that he should suspect them of being in full sympathy with Pedro; and that they greatly admired his moderation and forbearance in not resorting to extreme measures under such circumstances. But when it came Len's turn to excuse himself for his uncivil treatment of innocent men before giving them an opportunity to be heard, he did it in so blunt and bungling a manner that

the whole company, including François and Jeannot, laughed long and heartily.

Sol was called forth from his hiding-place among the high rushes, and Jim Beam's boat and the skiff, and the boat of Lucifer Grindle, were soon on their way toward the coast, all freighted with as happy a company of human souls as ever crossed Roanoke Sound before or since. And of that company, and not less happy than the rest, were Lucifer Grindle himself and his smiling, chattering old wife Comfort.

Three weeks passed, and still that whole company were at North Banks. Not only were the huts of Stam and Len crowded to their utmost capacity by the large addition of guests, but Stam and Len and Sol and Pierre and Lucifer and old Basil, with François as chief architect, had erected quite a commodious shanty as a place of habitation for themselves, and in a few days after their arrival they were all comfortable enough.

Paul, who was very fond of fishing, was as happy now as he desired to be. Not a day passed but that some of the men went to the beach with their fishing-tackle and caught quantities of fish,—some of which were more than three feet long and of the weight of fifty pounds or more.

Poor Gilsey Roe! never before had she known what real happiness was. She learned to romp and play and to laugh as loudly as the loudest, and never a day came but that she was marshalling the host of little strangers about the plains and valleys, and over the hills and through the thickets, and up and down the sea-beach and sound-shore; now they would be gathering grapes and chincapins and acorns in the thickets, and now busy in the chase of sand-fiddlers; now they would be rolling down the steep sand-hills; now wading in the sound; now eating; now sleeping,—ever joyous.

Kate, too, was joyous, and more than ever she desired to find a new home in the great world that she now heard spoken of so frequently.

The baby was well again, and Fawn and Lucie delighted to wash it and comb out its hair, that had never before been combed out, and to dress it in the clothes that they found in the trunk that had been washed ashore from the wreck twenty-nine years before, though they were all too large for it. And many a time as the mother received the child from their arms,

after they had dressed it to their satisfaction, she would hold it upon her bosom and look down into its face and imagine that nothing so beautiful had ever had life before.

Kate loved all the children dearly; but Fawn most of all, for she fancied that in her she could see a resemblance to Dear Mamma; and many a time did she press the not unwilling child to her bosom and softly touch her lips to hers. Fawn, too, who had never known of woman's pure love and affection, returned that love even more tenderly than she had courage to express by word or act; and often she would sit at Kate's side and tell her what she had learned from old Basil of the beauteous land where dear mamma had gone to dwell; often, too, she knelt with her and repeated the simple prayers that she had learned when her home was on the island in Wild Lake.

Three weeks, it has been said, had passed since that morning of the joyful meeting of Pierre and his family; but where had been Socrates Junior during that three weeks? For three weeks the bunk in Stam Weathers's house had been occupied by a very sick man. Scorched by fever and racked by pain, that poor man had been lying there unconscious of everything that had been transpiring around him; nor only so, but most of the time during his waking hours he had been madly raving, and staring wildly and fiercely about him,—often struggling with all his might to arise and be off,—never in such a condition that it was deemed prudent by his friends to leave him alone. That man was Socrates Junior.

Those that were there in the three boats that came from the island to the coast on that happy morning, who knew Socrates, were greatly surprised that he was not at the landing to receive and welcome them. But, when hour after hour passed, and still he failed to make his appearance, anxious inquiries began to be made for him. Gilsey related in the best manner she could, and as intelligently as she was able, all about the noises that had awakened her and the baby out of their deep sleep in the early morning, and about Nancy's flight and Socrates' pursuit of her; and she said that she had seen neither of them since. Those who knew Nancy began then to have dark suspicions, and a careful search through the woods was instituted, which resulted, after hours, in finding the old man several miles up the coast lying upon his back in the midst of

a thick jungle, groaning and breathing heavily, and no doubt he would have expired there if he had continued without assistance even for a few hours longer. But he was carefully taken up and removed to the house of Stam, and there in the bunk he had been lying ever since, and not a lucid moment had he had in the time. But woman's healing hand had been there to rest upon his fevered brow,—the music of her voice had been there to soothe him with words of tender sympathy.

All the men were ever ready to do what was in their power to relieve him and render his suffering as light as possible ; but there was one who never left his side for an hour at a time, —day and night he was there,—ever turning his hand where it might be for the sufferer's greatest relief. That man was Jeannot. And now, on this morning after the third week, Jeannot was occupying his usual place at the sick man's side. For hours a shade of deep sadness had been on the faithful watcher's face. During the past twenty-four hours the sick man had been unusually quiet ; and most of that time he had slept soundly. But his friends had forebodings that so sudden a change, from frenzy to peaceful quiet, was not for good ; and they were by no means satisfied that the long gentle slumbering was any evidence of improvement in the poor man's condition,—nay, they feared much that it was but that quiet that often precedes early dissolution. And Jeannot sharing these fears with the rest, was now even more watchful and attentive than before.

All was quiet in and about the hut. The sick man's friends were standing and sitting near him, looking on and wondering when the long slumber would end,—wondering for how many hours yet the death angel would delay his coming.

The sufferer had ceased his ravings so long before that every trace of fierceness had vanished, and now the pale sunken face was calm and placid. The hour of noon had passed before the sick man showed signs of remaining life. Jeannot was smoothing away the thin hair from his forehead when he sighed ; then the long quiet slumber was for a time broken. The deep eyes opened and turned wearily from one to other of those silent ones near ; then they fell upon the face of that faithful one whose place was nearest to him. For some moments they rested quietly there, seeming to watch the tears that welled up and out on the sad cheeks ; then they turned

for an instant in another direction. It was observed that the old man started slightly when the weary eyes returned to the sad face near him.

"I am dreaming," he said, in a feeble voice. "How like his face! Ah! I am dreaming,—my boy is dead!"

They were the first words that Socrates had spoken. The young man fell on his knees and laid his head on the pillow near the sufferer's. For a time sobs choked his utterance, but at last he said, "You are not dreaming, dear father. It is Lucien. It is your son."

"Lucien! My God! Is it indeed my boy! Lucien! I would embrace you, boy, but I cannot stir. Raise my arms and place them around your neck. There, there. It is my boy, even if it be a dream."

"Quiet now, dear Lucien," whispered François; "remember it is important that you command your feelings, for much depends upon your action now. Be strong, dear Lucien."

"Where am I?" asked the old man. "Where are we? and who are these near us?"

"You have been very, very sick; and we are at the house of a kind friend. All these are sympathizing friends; but rest quietly now: you will be in a condition to talk with me soon; but rest now, for you are weak and weary."

"Rest? Dear boy, it is sweet rest to have you near me. But are you to remain, Lucien? I fear to sleep, for I might lose you. Tell me again that I dream not, and that you will remain with me."

"It is no dream, father; Lucien is with you, and will remain here at your side. Be composed, then, for rest is needful to you now. I shall be here at your side when you awake."

François then whispered something to those present, and one by one they passed noiselessly out of the hut and left only Jeannot at his place holding the old man's bony hand in his.

Again the weary one was slumbering; but now his regular breathing told that the crisis had passed, and that his condition was favorable. The sun was setting when he awoke. François had returned and was seated near Jeannot when the deep eyes again opened. Those deep eyes were happier and less weary now.

"It was a sweet dream," the old man whispered; "a sweet

dream. My boy was with me, my arms embraced him. What gladness comes with such a dream !”

“It was not a dream, sir,” said François. “Lucien sits now at your side.”

“Not a dream? Is this Lucien? Raise your head, boy, that I may see your face. Yes, the face is his. Am I awake?”

“Yes, father,” said Lucien, “you are awake. You have been very ill.”

“Ill? Where are we? How long have I been ill?”

“We are at the house of a kind friend, on the sea-coast, father, and you have been ill for weeks.”

“Weeks? Do you not mean years? Where is your precious mother, boy? Ah! answer not; I know!”

“Be quiet and composed, dear father.”

“I will, my son. I will be quiet. I can but be quiet and at peace when you are near; but it is a joy, Lucien, to talk about your angel mother. Yes, *angel* mother; for I remember now that she is dead. How often my hands have placed flowers on her grave! What a long dreary blank has been life since she died! Yet why, Lucien, have I thought that *you* too were dead, and that I was alone,—utterly alone? Tell all, my dear boy, for feeble as I know I am, I am prepared to hear it all from you. Tell me what my life has been since the death of your mother. And why have I thought that you, too, had gone from me? All is confusion with me,—the real and unreal are woven so closely together, that I am unable to separate them. Tell me all, my boy.”

“Tell him,” François whispered; “he can hear it from *you*.”

“It is a sad tale, father, and you are very feeble.”

“I know it is sad, and that I am feeble, yet I am prepared to hear it all. So far from affecting me injuriously, it will lift a weight that has for long years been crushing down upon my heart.”

“In the midst of your deep grief for my dear mother,” said Lucien, “you received intelligence of my severe illness in a foreign land; then *you* became extremely ill, and your life was despaired of. After a long time you recovered sufficiently to take shipping to visit me; but the ship in which you sailed was wrecked, and only one on board besides yourself was saved. He reported that you could not be prevailed upon to remain in the boat in which you had left the sinking

ship with him, though it was dreary night, but that you insisted upon getting off on a part of the wreck that came drifting near. He was picked up by a passing ship on the next day. I could but cling to the hope that you had been saved, and for nearly two years past my life has been spent on the seas searching and inquiring for you. In all my travels I have been accompanied by this gentleman, my kind friend and preceptor, Monsieur François d'Au Bigne. He has advised my course from the first, and it was at his suggestion that we both shipped as common seamen at New Orleans, in the hope (faint though it was) that by mingling intimately with those whose business was altogether on the great waters, we might hear tidings of you; something, at least, that might place us in the true line of search."

"Say no more," said the old man; "reason was not able to sustain the heavy burden of accumulated sorrows and disappointments; but, thank God, my dear son is alive and with me. My dutiful and affectionate boy! Already I feel the rays of heavenly peace entering and warming my heart that has been so long crushed and bleeding beneath its weight of griefs, and that reason has returned and resumed her throne. Oh, humbly I thank Our Father for his goodness!"

Lucifer had been standing in the door listening in astonishment to these remarks of the sick man; and no sooner had he ceased speaking, then he stepped forward and stood beside the bunk. An expression of real gladness beamed on his face as he said, "Just but listen at the man; he's got well ag'in all in a minit like! But, see here, Socrates, sure as you are a livin' man you'd better let that *pear* bizness alone, for it's nothin' but that that's brought all this on you. Hanged if you don't bust your brains out sure 'nough, if you make many more sich dives headforemost on the hard floor. Quit the *pear* bizness, Socrates, for that's the 'casion of all this, sure as your name is Socrates!"

CHAPTER XLV.

HOMEWARD BOUND.

It was not long before the sick man recovered under the kind treatment that he received ; and his friends were greatly rejoiced that the recovery of sound mind accompanied that of a healthy body. Lucifer and Comfort were astonished beyond measure at hearing his conversations on practical subjects, and in language that could be understood. Socrates now made it a point to impress upon the minds of the simple but very kind friends, with whom he had so long sojourned, that all that he had said about the Pear Theory, and a thousand other things, were only the whims and fancies of a disordered brain. He informed them, too, that his name was not *Socrates*, but William Durelle. To all this they would sit and listen with great interest. It mattered but little to them what their strange friend's true name might be,—they continued to address him as *Socrates* to the very last. And as to the Pear Theory, they were very glad to learn the truth of the matter, and that the whole thing *was* a mere whim of the imagination ; for, so far from feeling any interest in the subject, it had been from the very first a great bore to them. And the fact is, all they remembered of what had been told them about it was, that the earth is exactly the shape of a pound-pear, which in their hearts they never had been able to believe,—knowing, as they did from what they saw every day with their own eyes, that it is as flat as the bottom of a tin pan. But when they came to be told that that about Doctor Skyelake and Chickimicomocachie was also a whim, their disappointment knew no bounds ; indeed, it required considerable argument on the part of *Doctor Skyelake* himself to satisfy them on that point,—if, indeed, they ever were fully satisfied,—for it was no easy undertaking to explain away the strange things that their own eyes had seen, and the unaccountable sounds that their own ears had heard.

Pierre, who had only been waiting for the recovery of the

sick man, began now to make active preparations to depart from the sea-coast for his home in Louisiana. Stam and Kate had gladly consented to accompany him and his family, but no one was more delighted at the prospect of seeing the great world from which all the wrecks came than was poor Gilsey Roe. Old Basil and his children were going with them too, for Lucie and Paul desired of all things that Fawn and Timon should remain with them; and the old man could not have it in his heart to separate his children from those whom they had already learned so dearly to love. Lucien, and his father and faithful friend, would also be of the company as far as to the first seaport; but from thence they would depart for their home in another direction. But no persuasion could induce Len and his family, or Lucifer and his wife, to leave their lifetime home for a dwelling-place in a strange land.

Both Marie and Kate desired much that Nancy would consent to go with them; but, though the sullen old creature had of late become much subdued, though she had seemed indeed to have formed some sort of attachment for those who treated her so kindly, yet she would not listen to the proposal that she should leave the barren sands of North Banks, upon which the seventy years of her life had been spent,—dark and sin-stained though those years had been.

Pierre had no difficulty in finding the box of gold coin that he had buried in the thicket on the morning after he had landed in the ship's gig. After taking from it barely enough to defray the expenses of himself and party to the nearest seaport, he divided the remainder, amounting to nearly two thousand dollars, among Len and Sol and Lucifer. He also made arrangements with Lucifer and Comfort,—who were hereafter to occupy the house that Stam was about to leave,—that they should provide for the comfort and necessities of Nancy so long as she should live.

Two as comfortable boats as could be got were engaged to take the party up the sounds on the way to the port, and all was in readiness for the departure on the following morning.

Though many weeks had passed since the party had come to the coast, and though the hut of Stam Weathers was not more than two miles to the northward of the inlet, yet not once had old Basil stepped his foot on Body's Island, not once had he visited the scenes of his sad afflictions of twenty-nine

years before. But now that he was on the eve of taking his departure far away, he determined to visit those scenes for the last time forever. Accompanied by Pierre and Stam and Lucifer, the old man wended his way to the inlet, crossed to the island, and then went in the direction of the old hulk that had afforded shelter to himself and his little charge in the days long ago. The scenes were still familiar to him. Still, as of old, the yellow level was wreck-strewn, and all was barrenness and desolation still. Changes there were, it is true; for there were wrecks and scattered fragments that had never before been seen, and many of the old hulks that were recognized had been sadly marred and shattered by the pitiless hand of time. There were the remains of his old dwelling-place; the decks had disappeared; a section of one side had tumbled outward, and, in several places on the other side, the bare ribs and bends were exposed to view.

The old man paused; his head was bowed, and tears stood in his eyes.

"Do you remember this place, Lucifer?" he asked.

"Remember it!" said Lucifer. "Right here is where I was dodged waitin' for the man to come out: there's where Nancy and him was standin' talkin'. I warn't but a mighty little spell cuttin' that youngun loose and gittin' off to Comfort with it. Out that way is the course I took, for Comfort was waitin' for it at the sound end of the inlet, in her skiff. Comfort knowed how to paddle across in a hurry! Then she knowed how to run up the sound-shore in a hurry till she got to the boat with the youngun, too. She knowed well enough where I had anchored the boat, with the sails all up, and the rudder hung, and she knowed well enough that I'd be there with her soon as I could clear myself of Nancy. About so is the course that me and Nancy took with the things; and 'way yonder,—you can see the top of it from here,—is the tree that we sot down under; and that's where the ghost come clawin' and tearin' down on Nancy's head. But didn't Nancy git mam-mocked! and didn't I git to the boat where Comfort was waitin', and push off from that North Banks in a hurry! Remember, eh? If I should live a thousan' year I shouldn't forgit! So *you* was him? and you ain't never been dead yet, as Socrates would have us b'lieve? Well, I guess it's so; but somehow it don't seem to me it's that way yet."

"Ah, Lucifer," said old Basil, "it was a cruel act to steal that little child away!"

"It was so," said Lucifer. "But then that's all that kept the youngun from gittin' killed. And like it's turned out, it kept the man from the same thing. I'm right down glad now that it was all did like it was. See what a proper gal Kate growed up to be; and see how smooth everything has turned round! Maybe so if you had kept on feedin' that youngun on cockles and nothin' else she'd kotch the colic and died after a spell; and then no tellin' what would a-gone o' you. But just see now: here's you and Kate, and here's Stam (as good a man as any gal ever got); and here's the youngun that Stam and Kate think so much of; and here's everything adzactly right. Yes, hanged if I ain't about glad it's all like it is!"

Old Basil smiled at the simple old man's earnest manner of expressing himself. Then the men made their way back by the sea-beach until they got opposite the thicket, when they crossed over and entered it by a path a little above Stam's house.

"You said you wanted to see the place where the two babies is buried before goin' off," said Stam, addressing old Basil, "and this path leads to it. Kate and Fawn has been goin' there about every day lately: they've rounded up the sand on the graves, and has gone about diggin' up green grass wherever they could find any, and carryin' it and settin' it out on the two little ridges, till they're green all over now. I seed 'em yisterday when I went there with Kate, and I was glad it was did; for it seems now that them little ones ain't to be forgot, even though we should be goin' clean away where we shan't never see the place where they are layin' no more. Yonder's the place. You can glimpse it through the bushes from here."

"Wait!" said Pierre. "Persons are already there!"

"Sure as I live," said Stam, "there's Kate and Fawn, with mammy betwixt 'em, all kneelin' in a row by the graves!"

Fawn was uttering a simple prayer, asking the Heavenly Father's guidance and protection. She ceased to speak. Kate ceased her sobbing at last, and was heard to say, "Oh, God! it's the last time that I shall be here; but I'm willin'

to go ; for I know I shall see my babies and Dear Mamma too ; and then these graves will be clean forgot !”

Nancy turned her tearless eyes toward Kate, after she had ceased to speak, and gazed in silence there for some moments ; then she asked, “ Think God cares for me, Kate ? ”

“ Yes, mammy,” she answered, “ He cares for us all.”

“ Tell Him, Kate, I wants to talk to Him too ; but I’m afeerd to do it. Maybe He’ll listen if you talks for me.”

A few words were said in a low voice ; then the three arose and passed away toward the hut. The men soon followed, and it was not long before they had all assembled again in Stam’s hut.

Kate and Fawn were now busily engaged packing away the precious child’s-clothing in the old trunk from whence it had been taken, while Pierre and old Basil sat on the chest near the door and looked silently on. An expression of surprise was upon the face of Pierre. He had observed on several of the pieces of clothing as they were smoothed away the word “ Adele.”

“ I have been wondering, Kate,” he said, “ at seeing *Adele* upon the clothing that you are placing in the trunk ; have you relative or friend by that name ? ”

“ It is my own name,” she answered, smiling ; “ all these pretty things was mine when I was a baby ; they come ashore in this trunk from the wreck.”

Pierre started to his feet. “ What wreck ? ” he asked.

“ *He* knows,” said Kate, pointing to old Basil ; “ all was drowned but two ! ”

“ Yes, they were hers,” said old Basil. “ Herself and one other were saved.”

“ Herself and one other ! ”

“ Ay ; and that other was myself. It has been a long time since that wreck came to Body’s Island,—twenty-nine years ! ”

“ Twenty-nine years ? For God’s sake, speak on ! Father, mother, sister ; these were all wrecked—all lost ! These, and a dear friend of the kind parents, were lost then. It was twenty-nine years ago ! ”

Old Basil went and took the little tin box from the trunk and opened it. “ The kindest friends that heaven ever vouchsafed to me,” he said, “ were lost with that ship. I saw

them die in the dark waters! See; these are their pictures!"

"Great God!" Pierre exclaimed, as he snatched the pictures from old Basil's hand. "*My father and mother!*"

"And, Pierre," said the old man, "she that stands at your side, looking upon them, is your sister!"

"Adele!" said Pierre, as he pressed the sobbing woman to his bosom, "Adele!"

"Oh," sobbed Kate, "I thought I must love you! I don't know why, but I thought I must love you! I was so sorry for you before you found your lost ones; and oh, I've been so glad,—so glad ever since!"

Lucifer cried right out,—Lucifer Grindle, that had not done such a thing before for fifty odd years: cried, loud enough, too, for every one present to hear him. "Hanged if I ain't right down glad now," he sobbed, addressing himself to old Basil, "that I did knock you down and run off with the youngun,—that I is!"

Comfort ran out-of-doors and had her cry all to herself; after which she came back, smiling happily, though her eyes were as red as ferret's. "Why, Lucifer Grindle!" she said, as soon as she stepped into the door, "you've been cryin' like a youngun! I heerd you, and I sees signs of it in your eyes yet!"

"Me!" said Lucifer; "that's nothing but a way I've got o' doin', Comfort. I warn't *cryin'*; you know I'm too old for that!"

"And my dear parents were friends of yours?" said Pierre, addressing old Basil.

"Ay; Paul de l'Auzanne was as near to my heart as a brother could be! Pierre, I am Jule d'Arcourt."

* * * * *

The morning for the departure came. The two little boats that had been engaged to take the party away were riding at anchor in the shallow waters near the landing. Their white mainsails and jibs were spread to the breeze; and they were swinging restlessly about as if impatient of delay. Pierre and his family, and Lucien and his father, and François, were seated in one of the boats, and Stam and Kate, and Gilsey with the baby, and old Basil and Timon and Fawn were in the other. They had all bade kind adieus to those who were

standing silently on the sandy shore,—to Lucifer and Comfort, and Len and Betsy and Sol, and Nancy,—and sadly were these looking upon those whom they should never again see!

In the bow of each boat stood a man holding the rope cable in his hand, and only waiting for the command of the man at the tiller to haul aboard the anchor; that done, and the restless little boats would away before the light breeze.

Old Basil, who for some minutes had been sitting with his head bowed, and his face buried in his hands, now sat erect. A moment more and the anchors would have been tripped. “Wait!” he said, in a tremulous voice, “I have a word to say: a word that I desire that *all* these shall hear. It must be said before we part; but the detention will not be long. Ah! had this old heart that so throbs now been less selfish than it is, it would not have waited until now to pronounce the sorrowful word; but it could not speak before.

“On the morning after that dreary night when Jim Beam stole away your babies, Kate, I found two tiny infants in an old skiff that had drifted far up the broad river. I took them to my wilderness home. There they dwelt with me for fourteen years; and dearer have they been to me than life itself! Oh, I had hoped in my selfish heart that they would continue to be mine—only mine—to the end! They are no longer mine! Precious Fawn and Timon! She that now sits between you, upon whom your dear heads are already leaning, she is your mother! Kate, they are your long-lost children! God gives them back into the loving mother’s bosom.”

THE END.

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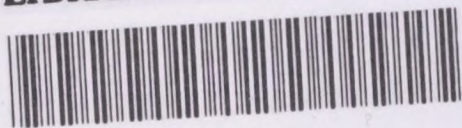
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